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# SMIKE TO BULLDOG

*Letters from Sir Arthur Streeton to Tom Roberts*

Edited with Annotations by R. H. Croll



Ure Smith Pty Limited Sydney



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SMIKE TO BULLDOG

“St. Kilda,  
Junction Rd.,  
Summer Hill.

Dear Bulldog,

Sydney is a very charming place. Called at Montefiore's office this morning and went with him to N.S.W. Gallery and studied the pictures again. The little gem by Mason is very tender and beautiful. You remember it; you must. What a fine thing, also, is Jacomb Hood's *Spring Decoration*. I've seen it twice, and it looks very, very fine—it's so happy, and some of the girls are so sweet and jolly. Oh, and the little girl who is carried by the youth and the maid. She's so fine and seems quite pleased with all the festive business. I'll go and have another long talk with her next week, and perhaps she may please me more.

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I have access to the Trustees' Room at Gallery and will work a little yet at my *Pastoral* before they hang it, and shall then get some work done, I think, at Coogee. What a lovely little place. Sand, bananas, empty bottles and color and pretty children. Shall do some good there, I think.

Yours very truly,  
SMIKE.”

*To the Memory of  
Miss Helen Boyes.  
In appreciation.*

## Introduction

THE principal figures in this book are two artists—Sir Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts, but the volume is not a Life of Roberts. That has been done already. He is no more than the living background here; he does not appear in person. These letters are concerned, first, and in some cases almost wholly, with the affairs of the writer, his thoughts, his hopes, his achievements, set down because he feels his old friend must be interested. He tells his own tale; the references to others are incidental.

Streeton, in his youthful letters, shows himself poet. Not that there is any evidence that he ever attempted to write metrically (save on one sad occasion), but he discloses a sensitiveness to beauty, an appreciation of the moods, and particularly the colours, of Nature, an elevation of thought and a feeling for the finer things of life that reveal a poetic mind struggling to find literary expression, and occasionally succeeding.

But his early landscapes are the best proof. There is no confusion of images, and no overstatement, to say they are poems in paint. If all Art is betrayal (as Oscar Wilde declared), then a true poet is confessed in these works.

With the natural hardening of the arteries came the equally natural blunting of the susceptibilities; the resultant change may be observed in progress in this correspondence.

Much controversial water has passed under the arches of Time since someone first raised the question of the influence of artist upon artist. As is usual in controversies, a definition of terms has been the last thing considered when "influence" has been discussed. So one critic may be using the dictionary meaning (to modify or affect) while another thinks it stands for to imitate or copy. None of the men of these letters who were so closely associated at their most impressionable period could be charged with imitation; each was distinctively himself; but undoubtedly each "influenced" the others, and all, including Conder, though he least of all, left an impression upon Australian Art generally.

A very great deal has been written about Conder. His life has been dealt with in such detail by Rothenstein and other biographers that we seem to know all about him . . . especially

his weaknesses. Of his forty-one years, he spent fewer than eight in Australia. But they were important in his career: "Conder's life as an artist began in Australia. He arrived in that continent at the moment when he began to feel the first intimation of his powers as a painter, and when a significant movement, destined to give birth to a native school of painting, was impending" (Rothenstein).

Roberts was an acknowledged leader; his natural force, backed by the wider experience he brought to the group, must inevitably have guided the younger men—that is, he must have influenced them in the feeling towards their art. Beyond that there is no need to go. Streeton acknowledged indebtedness to Roberts; doubtless, in turn Streeton's native ability, his instinctive responses, his keen vision, produced a lively reaction in Roberts. So they, in this way, "influenced" each other, but no one could confuse the productions of the two men. Streeton could say, using the word in its right sense, "Roberts was the finest influence the Australian art student has had."

A well-informed, but customarily over-emphatic, commentator asserts positively that Conder exercised no influence at all on Australian art. That seems too sweeping. Streeton has said that Conder was the most resourceful man as a painter he had ever known, surely suggesting that something had been learnt from him. And Streeton added that if his work reflected Conder's influence he would feel pride.

That, as Rothenstein points out, is more a kindly tribute to a friend than a confession. The "influence" was mutual and was reflected in their personal relations, and is not betrayed in their art. Of the three, Conder appears to have received most. But he gave, too: "Though of the same age, he seemed thirty years my senior in knowledge of humanity and worldly affairs," so Streeton; and it is clear that the young Englishman helped largely to inform and develop the poet in his Australian friend, in that way affecting his art.

## Letters from Streeeton with Annotations

NICKNAMES are like whippings—when they are once on they can never be taken off. But, while the names usually persist, their origins are generally forgotten by everyone but the possessors. The small group of artists who were responsible for what has been rightly called the Golden Age of Painting in Australia all had nicknames. Why were they given?

Fanciful titles are commonly gifts from the lively minds of schoolfellows; but these men, who labelled each other so freely, were past boyhood. Why did they find it appropriate to call Arthur Streeeton "Smike," why was Tom Roberts "Bulldog," Charles Conder "K.," Frederick McCubbin the "Prof.," Aby Altson "Farmer," Walter Withers the "Colonel," Louis Abrahams the "Don"?

William Moore's *Story of Australian Art* suggests that Smike was bestowed because of Streeeton's slight physique. That is possible, for we know that the original Smike of *Nicholas Nickleby* was anything but robust, and we know, too, that these artists were readers and that Dickens was the popular author of the period.

"Bulldog" is, perhaps, easiest to guess. Anyone who knew Tom Roberts will recall his courage and tenacity of purpose. Those qualities, the qualities of his canine namesake, showed very early in his life; he earned the title and deserved it to the end.

But Conder's "K." (sometimes "Kay") remains as obscure as McCubbin's "Prof.," Altson's "Farmer" and Abraham's "Don." Possibly the "K." was a play upon the hard C. of Conder. Withers, who joined the group later, apparently earned his military title because of a certain orderliness; it must have been noticeable in such a Bohemian gathering.

Bohemians they were, these brothers of the brush, but however lightly they took the chances of life and laughed at its difficulties, they regarded their art with a seriousness that amounted almost to religion.

The famous group began in 1885, when Tom Roberts, aged 29, fresh from a first visit to Europe to study art, linked up with a fellow brush, Fred McCubbin, just a year older, and they formed a camp in the then wilds of Box Hill, near Mel-



bourne. Their tent was pitched in Houston's paddock, on the rise above the bark hut of the owners. In after days Roberts described it as an idyllic spot—"the land sylvan as it ever was, tea-tree along the creek, young blue-gums on the flat alongside."

He was English born, but had lived in Australia since the age of 13. McCubbin was a native of Melbourne. Roberts had fallen in with some early impressionists during his old-world tour (1881-1885) and had studied under Bastien-Lepage, a master whose methods, as described by J. S. MacDonald, were "suited to depict subjects for which tradition had not yet prescribed a way of regarding and handling."

Many years afterwards, it was said, justly enough, that from the sketches brought out at that time by Roberts sprang Australia's first national school of art. His personality and example did even more.

On a trip to the seaside at Mentone, Roberts and McCubbin found one day a youth of 19, named Arthur Streeton, doing a sketch. He was a lithographer's apprentice. At Roberts' invitation he became a week-end visitor to the Box Hill camp.

A year later, that is in 1887, Roberts paid a visit to Sydney and had the good luck to meet, at a friend's house, another nineteen-year-old genius. This was Charles Conder, the Conder who was destined to achieve much fame abroad and of whom Arthur Streeton wrote, many years after Conder had left Australia: "He was the most resourceful man as a painter that I have ever known." In 1888 he came across to Melbourne and joined his fortunes to those of Roberts and Streeton at a new camp at Heidelberg.

By this time the Box Hill camp had been productive of some large canvases, mainly subject pictures. Roberts had painted *A Summer Morning Tiff* and *Reconciliation* (the first is in the Ballarat Gallery, the other in the Castlemaine), and McCubbin the *Down on His Luck* (which is in Perth) and the *Bush Burial* (now in Geelong). Streeton contributed a couple of landscapes, *Settlers' Camp* and *Pastoral*, the sale of which (the *Pastoral* brought in 50 guineas) heartened him to throw up his profession and take to painting as his life work.

He was the pioneer in what was to become the most famous of the artist camps of Australia, that of Eaglemont, on the hilltop above Heidelberg (Victoria). An eight-roomed wooden dwell-

ing stood there, empty and forlorn in its well-planted grounds. It commanded a striking view of the Yarra basin and the blue ranges to the east and north. Streeton jumped at an offer to occupy it, and he soon had Roberts and Conder for company. They made beds from saplings and floursacks, and, in Streeton's words, "painted luxuriously and successfully for two summers."

They were poor but happy. Writing to Roberts from Paris in after years, Conder recalled it all with longing: "Give me one summer evening again with yourself and Streeton—the same long evenings—songs—dirty plates—and the last pink skies." I have said that their art was almost a religion to them. They could be frivolous about everything but that. But, whatever their hopes and beliefs, none of them could have guessed that the work they were then producing was to attain to the fame it has to-day.

Australian art rose then to its full stature. Typical were such pictures as Streeton's *Golden Summer* (1888-1889) and his *Still Glides the Stream*. The *Golden Summer* gained the "Mention Honorable" at the Paris Salon in 1892. It is privately owned in Victoria, the price paid (a record then for an Australian painting) being one thousand guineas. Sydney National Gallery purchased *Still Glides the Stream*.

The subsequent history of these artists is well known. All became noted, and one became knighted. When they separated they kept in touch by writing, and three continued to do so for many years. The tone was always of unshaken friendship. The strongest bond appears to have existed between Roberts, Streeton and McCubbin. Their correspondence persisted to the last. When the Eaglemont trinity had dissolved, Conder went to Paris (1890), and Roberts and Streeton, after a fruitful time in New South Wales, spent long periods in England before finally settling in Victoria. Conder died in England in 1909, at the age of 41, Roberts in Victoria in 1931, aged 75, and Streeton (by now Sir Arthur) in Victoria in 1943, aged 76. Their earliest colleague, Fred McCubbin, who had been Drawing Master at the National Gallery School, Melbourne, from 1886 to 1917, was 62 when he died in the latter year.

Many of the letters which passed between Streeton, Roberts, McCubbin and others are still existing. With the approval of those concerned, I printed a number in the *Life of Tom Roberts*,

which was published in 1935. A fresh batch has now been made available by the kindness of Miss Boyes, of Lochmaben, Tasmania, sister of the late Mrs. Tom Roberts. The life of the time, and particularly the hopes and struggles of the artist community in Australia, is reflected in these epistles in vivid fashion, for each scribe was, of course, living the emotions and sharing the happenings as he wrote.

This volume contains those from "Smike." What is apparently the earliest is undated, but its contents suggest that it was written at Eaglemont, so it must have been produced between 1888 and 1890. More evidence of that period is in the heading, "Monday, I should think." He reports a day of "good, strong, snorting north wind, then a change, and the color blown off the landscape." He reports that someone he calls "Warrior Bold" has commenced a portrait of him: "Really it's like me, like a picture from the Bible—barring the yellow boots and Buckley's Evening Sun Hat."

Again, from that Heidelberg hilltop, he gloats over the riches he enjoys in his poverty. *The Bathers* he refers to was painted in 1889; the letter tells Bulldog that it was written "Saturday night. Warm, close, rather." He is still alone. "Oh, the long, hot day," he begins. "Oh, the gift of appreciation."

"I sit on our hill of gold, on the north side; the wind seems sunburnt and fiery as it runs through my beard. Yes, rather, see, look here: north-east the very long divide is beautiful, warm blue, far, far away, all dreaming and remote. Now to the east a little. A great, round cloud of smoke rises slowly up over the dreamy horizon into the soft, sweet, eastern sky, then reaching the wind, floats gently south like a stream of Turkey lollie or spiders' threads, making dim and large the long, majestic Dandenong Ranges. Yes, I sit here in the upper circle surrounded by copper and gold, and smile joy under my fly net as all the light, glory and quivering brightness passes slowly and freely before my eyes. Nothing happier than this. I shout and laugh at my immense wealth, all free and without responsibility. Who could steal this from me? No one. Oh, that I could roll some up—as a present. Oh, I'll try. The receiver has a good soul and healthy thought. Yes, come and share my riches, they are daily instalments from heaven. I counted 'em all to-day; there's that long hill who looked for gold dust this morning

and got it wrapped in smiles from the sun, my good friend in heaven. I lay and watched the evening bow to him. Such rosy grace, I never saw. 'Tis well the noon did not see her.

"Now 'tis 11 p.m., and starry outside. I'm alone with my thought, and really we do enjoy ourselves in our room. Your tin candlestick is close to the window, and a hundred little moths try to get it at the candle, but, poor little chaps—I've generously closed the window, and they can't be burnt. You enquire after my Bathers. I have a little bother (model, &c.), but I'll try and bring it up healthy and strong in the way it should go."

A couple of notes headed St. Kilda, Junction Road, Summer Hill, give Streeton's first impressions of Sydney. Undated, they probably belong to 1890. They are addressed, as usual, to "Dear Bulldog," who appears to have been in Melbourne at the time. The Montefiore mentioned is E. L. Montefiore, one of the earliest of etchers to practise in Australia, and at that time Director of the N.S.W. National Gallery. He it was who had been responsible for the purchase by the Sydney Gallery of Streeton's *Still Glides the Stream*. The price was £70. It was the first picture by a Victorian to be bought by that Gallery. Fullwood was A. H. Fullwood, remembered best for his etchings and by his drawings for the *Picturesque Atlas of Australia* and in the *Bulletin* and other Sydney journals, while Frank Mahony was another well-known illustrator, who later did drawings for some of Henry Lawson's stories. Spence would be Percy F. S., who, like the other two, did much black-and-white work in addition to painting. Barnett was the photographer who claimed to have bought the first picture Tom Roberts sold; he was afterwards to become a London success in portraiture. Anson was obviously the George Anson who made such a hit in comedy parts with the Brough and Boucicault Company. I take it the Potter was Mrs. Brown-Potter, the actress with Kyrle Bellew. It is pleasant to note Streeton's appreciation of K.'s (Conder's) work. He was ever generous in praise of his early colleagues. *A Staffordshire Landscape* was the title of the Mason picture (G. H. Mason A.R.A.) he admired. The Jacomb-Hood is known as *The Triumph of Spring*.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

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Dear Bulldog,

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Yours very truly,  
SMIKE.”

## WORKING AT COOGEE

In the second letter from that address is a mention of the Charringtons, who put on a series of Ibsen plays in Sydney and Melbourne, notably "A Doll's House," starring Janet Achurch. Streeton presented Miss Achurch with the first picture, *Coogee Bay*, he painted in New South Wales. Nerli is, of course, the Marchese who came to Australia from Italy in 1886 and lived here for some years. He painted many portraits both in Melbourne and Sydney, and during a visit to Apia, in Samoa, he was given sittings by Robert Louis Stevenson, the result being a likeness which R.L.S. preferred amongst all those made of him by artists the world over.

"Summer Hill,  
Monday Evening.

I have just now finished the 'Miserables,' Victor Hugo. It is a good book, but it's so very sad. The end is enough to make you weep, it's so expressive of suffering. Jean Valjean's death is like that of Little Nell. These two deaths are so touching and simple to read and feel. They put you in a mind to love everyone.

Am doing a little work at Coogee, but progress is difficult; the weather has been damnable, raining all day long—so monotonous and sad. I walked up and down the beach and perched on the rocks for about 3 hours on Friday, raining all the time; worked in a boathouse for a while also.

But, to-day. I did enjoy nature and please myself to-day. Worked in the morning at an upright canvas [a little sketch is inserted here. R.H.C.]

The ocean is a big wonder, Bulldog. What a great miracle. It's hard to comprehend it, like death and sleep. The slow, immense movement of this expanse moves one very strongly. You're made to clutch the rocks and be delighted, a dreadful heaving and soft eternity.

After sunset 'twas a silver ocean to-night. All people had gone to wait for the train, and I came down slowly in the dusk, and close to me, watching also, was a little girl about 10 sitting on the sand, *so still*. I stood a while thinking of her and the great spread of water, and I felt very much inclined to take this dear little creature in my arms and kiss her, sit down next her, so innocent, and who may some day become a fine woman. She may be powerful like this broad water some day. I watched

with happy interest all this delight that men can't sell to you. She got up, fastened on her boots and went slowly after the other people. I watched her affectionately and then the large, pale moon on the rollers. Oh, what a lot we enjoy and how good everything is. The train full of women and children, one little shy boy on my knee. Workmen in the smoko. Two convent women also.

Have at last found Barnett; went and dined with him at Lavender Bay. He is very artistic and has good, strong appreciation for the beautiful. He has taken (I think) 190 different things of Brown Potter and about 40 of Kyrle Bellew. I do like him very much. Your picture of Coogee looked very good the evening I was there.

Have the Charringtons come over? I think they are to open on 5th inst. in 'A Doll's House.'

At present I don't think there are very many *great* painters in Sydney—between you and me, Cowen's work looks *dam bad*. Europe doesn't seem to make everyone paint. I like Nerli. He will have some work for our show next time. Thinks of coming to stay in Melb. . . .

Truly yours,  
ARTHUR STREETON."

A half-page with the same heading thanks the Bulldog for £7—"it will keep me going till the exhibition," and adds this pleasant picture:

"Made the acquaintance of a lovely little boy; brought me his boat to paint. I did it in blue and gold and the rudder emerald green. He was very pleased. This morning is delightful and warm.

Yours truly,  
SMIKE."

Streeton was letting his pen take charge when he addressed T.R. from Summer Hill, Sydney, on September 20, 1890. The envelope is decorated, back and front, with drawings which a utilitarian post office did its best to obliterate with liberal post-marks. The letter itself, too, contained a couple of sketches in the text. Roberts was then at Grosvenor Chambers, Collins Street, Melbourne, and art circles in Victoria were disturbed

COMMENTS ON ART SOCIETY'S EXHIBITION

by meetings to decide on a home for the Society (presumably The Victorian Artists' Society). The letter which follows, dated a few days later, shows how important the issue seemed to Smike.

“Summer Hill,  
Tues evg.  
20th Sept., 1890.

Dear Bulldog,

It is 10 minutes to 10, and I've not done anything all day.

I want to have a talk; spend all my evenings with my people at home. Occasionally go to the theatre, 'Macbeth,' 'Boccaccio,' &c., 'Frou Frou'. Went to a smoke evening, 'Art Society,' N.S.W.

I sent you a catalogue of Exh. here. In looking through same I notice that out of 231 pictures 68 are £5/5/- pictures, and out of 231 there are 138 pictures at £10/10/- and under. I think they paint here rather much for Art Unions and so on.

Things are very slow here, and I don't do any work and don't feel inclined to commence anything else. And the Victorian people, I think, are a bit quicker to feel Art. Soon as the Exh. is up I'll run back.

Felt so dull this evening, so went out into backyard and stood there some time. You can think with a clear sky at night. The Milky Way was bent north and south right across the western sky—beautiful. Southern Cross and, I think, Venus just setting over the houses, so large and bright and warm, like a large lamp.

I have been having a go at photography lately; my brother-in-law has a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -plate camera, most interesting.

Barnett has a thorough sort of way of going about his work. I went home and dined with him one evening some time ago. He seems to feel rather artistic. I like him very much.

You've heard from old K. then? Hope he will work hard. He promises bigger results than anyone that I see here.

I really think Vict. Art will prosper if we get to work. I went to Church here with my sister one evening—first time for years. I could not feel half as reverent as I do in the bush, among the great silent trees.

Wedy. Evening.

Went up to Theatre Royal and had a long yarn with old Gordon. He thinks a good deal of you. Took the train home



and smoked all the time hard. There is no doubt a pipe of tobacco is a very fine thing. Arriving home I find your note from Gembrook, and it was pleasant and comforting. Gembrook must be lovely now. Miss Baker told me how lovely it was in Spring. 'O, Miss Baker, she is a very fine woman.' 'Bless her' wherever she is (this is, of course, awfully confidential, Bulldog).

You describe in your letter the gentle, soft rain drenching and feeding the tall, straight trees; it was just through the same thing I escorted her home soft, quiet, &c., and I felt extremely proud.

I must try and get back by 30th inst. Am sure to sell something before then.

Am sorry there is opposition to the fine site offered the Society. Blast those fellows somehow. This move is for the benefit of Art. And what are they? Do they represent the pillars of Art in this country? Certainly *not*. Oh, hang it, I hope it comes right. Look here, we must move quickly and strongly about this, and I'll try and get back by 30th.

The people of Sydney drink more than our people. Did you notice when you were here how the girls grow? They are women at 15 or 16 and fit to be married. They are rather broad, strong and inclined to be short.

I go and dine at Charringtons, at Woollahra, very often; they are fine people. She is a very artistic woman, and all Sydney is running after her now. Mrs. C. introduced me to a Mrs. Terry, and said I was one of her very intimate friends. Mrs. Terry told me I was very fortunate. This occurred at an At Home on the stage of 'Her Majesty's' on Thursday afternoon; some lovely women there and some fine intellectual-looking men; she arranged the stage beautifully with carpets and chairs, umbrellas and lounges, draperies and lights, and looked herself splendid; music in full swing in the dress circle. She is the most earnest professional woman I've met. Her daughter Nora is coming on finely.

I have seen 'Frou Frou,' 'Macbeth,' 'Doll's House.' She is strongest in the latter, I think.

Don't forget to write to

Yours truly,

WRETCHED SMIKE."

“Summer Hill,  
26th Sept.

My dear Bulldog,

I'll not be down in time for this important meeting, 30th. Have not sold sufficient to cover frames. Curse on the ignorance and dull perception of people. Have written to my father; he will pay for my frames, but I left till last thing in hopes of selling something. So will not be present at the meeting. You *must* get the men together and win this thing if only for the sake of ART. Damn it, we've fooled about too long; you have always done your best. I have written to the meeting and have instructed the Secty. to recite (as well as he is able) my feelings to the general meeting. The council should have decided this business, I think.

‘Pull up your socks, Bulldog!’

Get Humphry, Rockwell, Jones, Monteath together; they all respect your work; get 'em all up. Hope Wilson reads my epistle properly. I think then I would make those old chaps sit up.

With best wishes for success in this meeting and love to Prof. and yourself,

SMIKE.

Don't forget to get the Old 'Don' to roll up. Handasyde, if he has a vote. Withers, Williams, Colquhoun. Spend half an hour with J. Ford P., also Loureiro and Catani. Miss Williamson, ask her to come and vote; am sure she would. Mesdemoiselles Sutherland, Price, Southern, Chapman, Fuller. Hang it, there seems plenty.

IT MUST BE DONE

FORTISSIMO

Beat a big drum, no piping bullfinches.”

The final letter from that address shows how deeply the early Eaglemont days had bitten into an impressionable youth. Farmer Aby is, of course, Aby Altson, who that year secured the Travelling Scholarship. He worked in London for a time, and, at latest, had settled in India. His Scholarship oil was known as *Flood Sufferings*. Presumably the Orchardson mentioned is *The First Cloud*, the Graham *An Easterly Breeze*, and the Watts *Love and Death*, three canvases which had been acquired by the National Gallery in 1887. The Don, whose title recurs from time to time, was the Louis Abrahams (Streton

## SMIKE TO BULLDOG

mentions him somewhere as a lovable Jewish friend) who showed great promise in his early association with Roberts and McCubbin but who abandoned art for a commercial life. The Prof. and his "pretty damsels deep in art" was a reference to the National Gallery school. Leon ("Sonny") Pole was one of the earliest residents of Charterisville, the camp which succeeded Eaglemont at Heidelberg. On the front of a catalogue of "Recent Work by Tom Roberts" (1924) appears a reproduction of the diploma issued by the Pre-Historic Order of Cannibals certifying that Roberts, real oil painter, had been admitted to the Esoteric Circle. This is dated 1896 and is signed by Pole as Rex and George Coates as Ex-rer. Amongst the other decipherable signatures are those of two of the Lindsays—Lionel and Percy.

Everything points to this undated letter as having been written in 1890.

"St. Kilda,  
Junction Rd., Summer Hill,  
Sunday Evng.

Dear Bulldog,

How are you, old chap? How is 'Farmer Aby' coming on? Presume that the Scholarship Exhbn. will soon take place; he must be nearly complete. Would very much like to be present at that Exhibition. How also is the wily old Prof. and his work, and all his pretty damsels 'deep in Art'?

On my return to our Melbourne, I shall first fill my pipe and have threepennorth of tram, then scoot away to the studios at the Gallery, see some of the students, then down to Orchardson, Graham, Watts and company, and see the Prof., of course; then up to you. We'll have a good long smoke and think through all the past summer. The enjoyment of 'the last summer at Eaglemont' was to me more intense than anything I have up to the present felt. It would surprise you how often I think of it, and, oh, it is a great comfort. Its suggestion is a large harmony, musical, rose. Fancy if you could grasp all you feel and condense your thought into a scheme which would embrace sweet sound, great color, and all the slow soft movement, sometimes quick with games, and through all the strength of the great warm and loving sun. (I feel this very much as I write, so don't read it if you are in a great hurry.)

## RECOLLECTION

Think with me a little, back, say, to that night K. and I were out on the plateau near the house. We were rather depressed with the heat of the day, so with only our pants, socks, and shirts on and blankets and pillows to lie on; you remember, we were on the dry hill. Then you joined us, we smoked, and thought, and conversed for a long time. I tried to sing 'That Summer Night, My Darling.' Garonne, you recollect. Went slowly back to the house very late, about 11 or later, our foreheads finding resistance in the strong spider webs. And the silent stars, how they make us think. How they glittered, too, behind and through the silent, stately firs and pines. K., I think, had a long drink of water and lime juice before starting to bunk. . . .

Again Queen's Birthday, when the Don and his wife were out and the mass of picnic outside—jolly hot day, the tank keys in the safe keeping of Bill Peg. Poor K.'s patent arrangement for keeping door of 'Block Hospital' shut. The painful recollections of his suffering. How we made sketches of the girls on the lawn. The lovely pure muslin, and gold, sweet grass-seeds and the motherly she-oak, with its swing spreading a quiet blessing over them all. Behind this splendid tree was the deep gold of summer gates of the west sunset, and the whole gem was framed, yes, with oleander on the east with the two tropical sleepy round bushes, and on the south pittosporum, and north the big solemn pine. They seemed to keep guard as the silver dusk of night simplified the group of quiet, happy boys and girls. The return to the big room, the missing spoons, lost sunshades, and over all the bustle and healthy fun of little 'Topsy,' who seems like 'Cigarette' in some ways.

The uncertain charm of the hill and valley between house and rly. station and 'Auld Lang Syne' on platform and 'Farewell' quietly and slowly down the township road with Colonel, and Sonny Pole and Whelan. The two drinks and very, very slow pace up the hill, our home. Don't you remember you and I lay down to rest just below Dr. Bleek's house? Whelan and Colonel went on—how we thought, smoke and dozed, and woke up about 2.30 a.m. Then uphill again and to rest, after another look at the Southern Cross.

A few more men good in their way as our Prof. would cause quickly a big movement.

Well, we can't have last summer again till, well—I'm going to enjoy the coming one immensely if all's well. I feel more than I can ever write about this. However, I'm sure it will help my work.

Had a lovely long walk into the bush last Monday—about 18 or 19 miles. Took our lunch and one bottle of beer and flute and terbac. I wish you'd been there. An Englishman, Mr. Edwards, and I collected a large bunch of beautiful orchids, 6 or 7 kinds, lovely delightful flowers, hiding their beauty among the grass and ferns, and wattle, wattle, wattle, it would make a fine Garden of Eden; and heath, and gums, broad decorative feeling masses of shimmering bronze and crimson. Sarsaparilla twisting her purple strength round everything; she is most amorous and sheds her color like blue tears if you pluck her roughly. How sarsaparilla 'loves and is not loved.' I mean by Philistines who sometimes come from the old country, for instance, my brother-in-law—he misses it all.

Varnishing day last Saturday and to-morrow. I was signing a small sketch of McMahan's Pt. at 4 p.m. Saturday when someone wished to see me. I went outside. A gentleman awaited me with a letter (from Mr. Bevan, amateur artist and critic, I hear) which instructed him to purchase, if possible, the very sketch I was at the time signing. Strange. He had not seen the work. Price £7/7/-.

Have a good deal of work in. But I feel honestly that the Hanging Committee of N.S.W. have not paid my work the respect I feel it deserves.

I came in Saturday morning, was looking round, and one of the Committee asked me if I was satisfied. I had not seen the Exh. even; in half an hour another, and then another, asked me. Why do they ask me? It is foolish, and suggests a timidity in sticking to the work they have done. One man, Lister (poor work), pressed me to express myself. I said 'No.' I contribute my work subject to your hanging, and, therefore, will abide with, &c. He could see what I felt and pressed me to give my opinion on the hanging of my work, whereupon I slogged into a number of things on the line, trips. This is, of course, only to yourself. I feel disinclined to show here again.

No. Barring two or three fellows, the people seem to me to think too much of sales.

“FIRE’S ON”

No. They can be dam’d, except two or three friends I’ve met. I like Barnett very much. He is a man of considerable talent and ability and very quick and original. He liked your *Shearing*. His wife is fine looking.

Yours very truly,

ARTHUR STREETON.”

Roberts arrived at the Metropole, in Sydney, in 1891, and late that year camped near Saunders’ Boat House, Mosman’s Bay, which became a rendezvous for artists and others, including that versatile genius, the conductor and composer, Marshall Hall (these irreverent friends named him the Music Hall). He was so delighted with the place and the company that he dedicated his “Hymn to Sydney” to Arthur Streeton. [Note by RHC.: Mosman’s Bay was originally the headquarters of Archibald Mossman’s whaling industry.]

Meanwhile, Smike had gone to the Blue Mountains, where he produced some fine work, including that *Fire’s On*, which is one of the treasures of the Sydney Gallery. It was bought in 1893 for £150. (The ancient saying that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country is illustrated in the case of Streeton: The National Gallery of his native State did not recognise him until 1896, when it purchased his *Purple Noon’s Transparent Might*.)

He returned to Melbourne after a few months in the mountains, then joined up again with Roberts at Sirius Cove, Mossman’s Bay, where Streeton later planted one of the two flame trees which still mark the landing place of their old “Curlew Camp.”

A number of letters which he wrote to the Bulldog between 1891 and 1902, some from Glenbrook, in the Blue Mountains, some from Richmond and Berwick, in Victoria, as well as a few from England, have already been published (see *Tom Roberts: Father of Australian Landscape Painting*, Robertson and Mullens, 1935). Several were adorned with lively drawings.

One of the series written at Glenbrook about the end of 1891 has not previously been printed. It records some exciting incidents which had made him glad to move from Penrith.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

“Daisy Cottage,”  
Glenbrook,  
Tuesday Evg

Dear Bulldog,

I firmly believe I'm settled at last. This morning I left my cottage at Penrith and by the 11 train came up here, and I've struck it here, by Jove. Here 'tis about 1200 feet up, and, oh, so splendid to-day. Have chosen a fine subject for the W. Color, sitting on the heights of Lucasville, where, without turning the head, one's eye sweeps a great extensive plain fertile with crops and orange groves, and the pure Nepean water running through it, such a grand sight this evening, the sun setting golden behind me and the broad, massive shadow of the mountain (on which I sit like a speck) spreading like a great wing of the night over the great blue peaceful vale. All the air is still, the crowing of cocks, dogs bark and their melody reaches for miles far up to where I rest. Cows look like wee bits of color scraped off your old palette, and, man, why! he's nowhere to be seen; he's just out of it. You just think of him when he blows his train whistle, as it rushes down from the zig-zags and seems to slide slowly down to Penrith, like a tiny worm, and yet, perhaps, 'tis a goods of 15 or 20 trucks each containing 8 big strong bullocks which, poor beasts, after being jostled and bruised very much, are to be gobbled up by pretty girls with soft delicate cheeks, matrons, and safe old men. Yes, here is a great real drama going on in front of me. To the right sou'-east the plain rises a little, and thousands of strong gum trees stand in a line, up to which comes the civilised side of things—crops of maize, lucerne and prairie grass, all so soft and peaceful and yet gradually edging their way into the stately dominion of the eucalyptus. Looking from here the gums look like thousands of bronzy grey ants coming over the gentle rises—just like that. And then I rise and go back a mile to my lodging at Glenbrook. So interesting and Australian altogether, men and all.

The country between Lucasville and Glenbrook rises and falls a good deal; and there's a sort of canyon, running west into the golden glory of Blue Mountain sunset. And there are about a hundred tents pretty close together (as a rule)—big, strong, young chaps, some with wives and children. On one tent pole

was fixed a beautiful waratah, on another a girl's great, big, yellow straw hat. A regular 'Roaring Camp' splendid, and they're cutting a tunnel out of the rock all yellow, and a little machinery to help; shirts and pants hanging out to dry and dozens of fires sending up the columns of blue smoke. Some lovely, restful bits, something like old Box Hill. Great, well-grown she-oaks, all hairy and soft and full and rich. And I get back to our little cottage—a man who is an invalid, and his wife, both so good and nice, and they're making me comfortable. So nice and quiet here now. One minute from Rly. Stn. Had curried fowl for tea. So glad to leave Penrith. My cottage there was one of a row, and on my left lived a woman with several children and a fearful temper. Three nights ago I was writing in my best room with a cosy fire . . .

She is chiefly remarkable for a wonderful flow of speech which is not the most select and is carried on with little cessation all . . . day . . . long—mind that. He (the happy husband) came home tight, and she gave him 'hell and tommy.' A tennis match of bad grammar and words. The usual 'bloody' got slapped in the net most frightfully. After an hour this harmless pastime gets a bit slow. (She is energetic, large of bone, fleshy, and with a bad-tempered, fiery, amorous eye.) I saw her once from my back yard, and I ran in and bolted the door. She's a daisy, a regular teaser. They resumed the business of the second act with certain amount of muscular exercise (the wall's not thick, so I *had* to hear it all). She seized an axe or stock, or something heavy, and shot at him with it—missed. Then they wrestled, freeing themselves of a healthy oath when breath allowed. She got the gentle instrument again and fetched him a terrible, 'orrible whang on the head, amid great applause from the crockery and furniture. He came to the earth, and then a dead silence—and I shivered. He told her 'she had cut open his head—that's all.' So I revived instantly, put more wood on my fire, sucked a sweet-smelling orange, filled my pipe, and felt sincerely grateful to Providence that he was not killed.

The other neighbours are very nice. Their little girls and babies and boys came and played about my door, went an errand for 3d., and this morning the eldest, almost 16, good-looking girl (amorous type, Bulldog) swept up for me and whitewashed the hearth and got 2/-, and I gave 'em some wood and the



father helped me carry my bags to station. So nice—quite sorry to leave 'em.

Well, I practised W. Color a bit and I can't cotton on to it very easily. I shouldn't think a sculptor could ever paint a W. Color picture. Must try again. After I've been here a fortnight I'll get a tent and stay, I think, all the long summer—a splendid place.

Yours truly,  
SMIKE."

Still another Glenbrook (Blue Mountains) letter has come to hand. It is addressed to the Prof. (McCubbin), and its two sections are dated, respectively, "Saturday Eve." and "Sunday Night—Oh, such a night!", the unindicated year being 1891. It has some special interest from the description the artist gives of the origin of his famous *Fire's On!*, in the Sydney Gallery. Incidentally, he clears up a doubt regarding the title of that picture. The *Arthur Streeton Catalogue* (published by Sir Arthur in 1935) has it as *Fires on Glenbrook*—surely a printer's error. Properly it is *Fire's On!*, being the warning call of the road-makers preparatory to a blast. The water-colour of the same subject was bought by Mr. Howard Hinton, of Sydney, so well-known as a patron of the arts.

Sketches of his surroundings and of himself are included, and the letter ends with a pen-and-ink self-portrait, his head buried in his hand, sighing Heigh Ho.

This letter was given by McCubbin to James Quinn (then a young student at the National Gallery School), who has kindly lent it for reproduction here.

"Glenbrook,  
Saturday Eve.

Dear old Prof.,

I'm in the Blue Mountains boarding in a wee little cot. for £1 a week. The sun is beautiful in the morning. He rises with me, he goes with me through the dewy forest, and is very intimate with me as I step through all the wondrous wild flowers. Birds chirp and whistle as I bare my white limbs to the first pure morning sunlight, and standing on a mossy sandstone rock gaze around and contemplate as my skin is gently warmed

all over with the flood of sun. All around and above fine tall red gums, smooth of trunk, as though cast in iron. The blood-wood, grey gum, turpentine tree, wattle, and all sorts of flowers in their best summer array. Below me runs a crystal virgin brook with a rocky bottom and rushes flourishing, tickling me and having great fun as I step gently into the cold, clear water, one foot, then the other; I splash the water high over my head; it descends in hundreds of gems; dry myself with nice towel on the sunny rock; shake my hair about in the sun to dry, and into my bright striped pyjamas and back to breakfast. After the meal, boil a billy of tea, pack lunch—*stacks* of passionfruit; ruby twist, water-colours and picture—light up and march off at 9.30 to my work. I follow the railway line for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile through a canyon or gully where big brown men are toiling all the hot day excavating and making a tunnel, which will cost thousands (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile long), but will save (apparently) wearing out a great number of engines on the first Zig Zag. I've past the west mouth and now am arrived at my subject, the other mouth, which gapes like a great dragon's mouth at the perfect flood of hot sunlight. There is a cutting through the vast hill of bright sandstone; the walls of rock run high up and are crowned by gums bronze-green, and they look quite small, being so high up, and behind is the deep blue azure heaven, where a crow sails along like a dot with its melancholy, hopeless cry—long drawn, like the breath of a dying sheep. Right below me the men work, some with shovels, others drilling for a blast. I work on the W. Color drying too quickly and the ganger cries 'Fire,' 'Fire's on'; all the men drop their tools and scatter and I nimbly skip off my perch and hide behind a big safe rock. A deep hush is everywhere—then, 'Holy Smoke!'; what a boom of thunder shakes the rock and me. It echoes through the hills and dies away 'mid the crashing of tons of rock; some lumps fly hundreds of feet sometimes and fall and fly everywhere among the trees; and then a thick cloud laden with fumes of the blasting powder. All at work once more—more drills; the rock is a perfect blazing glory of white, orange, cream and blue streaks here and there where the blast has worked its force. Work awhile, then again 'Fire,' 'Fire's on!'—and off we go, and then work again. At 12 all knock off and the 'Fish' has just gone over the hilltop from Sydney with its passengers and mails for

Katoomba and Bourke. I crawl under a shady rock and have lunch and inspect my arms, which are getting bronzed more and more, with the flood of palpitating summer sunlight. Prop up my work, and I think it's coming but just fairly. I'll soon begin a big canvas (oilcolor) of this. I think it looks stunning. 'Tis like painting in the 'Burning Fiery Furnace'; so beautiful and bright and yet so difficult to attain. Proff., if you ever come here, beware—beware of the *tick*. They are hellish insects, shaped like a tick or flat like a wedge. They get under the skin and make straight to any vital part, and then, I understand, it's simply hell, you know, with the *top off*. The bush here's full of 'em, and I got one brute in the back of my immortal head. Even the invisible halo didn't frighten him (I'll begin to believe that halo is only a myth). I felt him boring into my nut like a bradawl and asked the country wife to look and see what was up. She said 'Tick,' and as I sat like a rock on a chair I got a detailed description of the powers given (Lord knows why) to this little brute. His head and  $\frac{1}{2}$  his gentle body were embedded in my head, and they applied kerosene and with a tweezers drew him as you draw a tooth, Sir. I must admit I felt a little relieved after that and indulged in a *partickularly* lengthy smoke.

Sunday night,  
and Oh, such a night.

To-day opens with the bright sun and my bathe as usual. After breakfast, pack up, without coat and vest, just a strap to keep my pants up, and off I go. How jolly in the 'glowing morn.' 'Tis very hot, the air is rather thundery and rarefied like that of a balloon. I don't settle for a while. Soon a darkness fills my soul as the black demon approaches me and grins as he tightens his beastly grip on my poor stomach. He is called 'Diarrhoea.' I was bad all the hot hours of the morning, crawling weakly about the high hill with my billy of tea and basket containing lunch and about a doz. passion, on which I looked and sighed audibly. Even my dear pipe did I relinquish. I came up to the scratch again, and looking down over the vast Emu Plains behold all the sweeping grandeur of a thunder cloud suspended over the plain. The different air currents play

round its edges, but the bulk is the same, and grows angry and purple in its vast strength, which measures miles. I contemplate, and ejaculate 'Glory,' 'Glory,' 'Glory'—what a sight. 'Tis like the human race, its crown is beautiful, snowy, happy like a damsel's ivory bosom; and all peace and smiles as it curls and rolls gently reclining against the deep azure dome of heaven. Then the other side; underneath it is a lowering sullen color and lightning like a death-agony leaps downward from its heart, and it moans and thunders and then despairingly sweeps the earth with tears. I seize my paints and try. But no, it cannot be to-day. My stomach fails again, and so my head must stop. I bundle them together; my W. Color box is almost too hot to touch; and with a long, loving look behind at the spectacle so sublime I pull myself together and tramp the rails toward home. Reviving a bit, I sit down, drink tea and eat a bit, rest, and then yarn all the afternoon with my friends, the big, stalwart men. Sitting on a gunpowder keg at the tent door, I hand round the ruby twist; we smoke, and I listen to long yarns and adventures—diggers, prospectors, and so on. One old chap, but energetic; tales of coal, gold, and discussions on the present hard 'bullocking' they have to do in the broiling sun. I like these men. They're like a 'roaring camp,' big and bronzed. I say 'Good-bye' to my big friends and move off. My path lies toward the west, which is a flood of deep gold. I felt near the gates of paradise—the gates of the west.

I'd done nothing all day and the diarrhoea was off for a while, so made a sketch of a row of tents glowing in the last golden light. The men came round and you'd be surprised how they are interested. I'll undertake to say that the love of nature and appreciation of the beautiful is stronger and more apparent in these men—10 times more so—than in the average wealthy men of the city, who boast a taste.

The night is exquisite, a mellow liquid full flood of twilight is veiling all nature and the soft radiance of the stars getting stronger. It is a lovely, lovely night.

Remember me kindly to all my friends, and the students at the Gallery and Mrs. McCubbin, and write to your poor old

SMIKE."

Smike was back in Victoria when next he accosted the

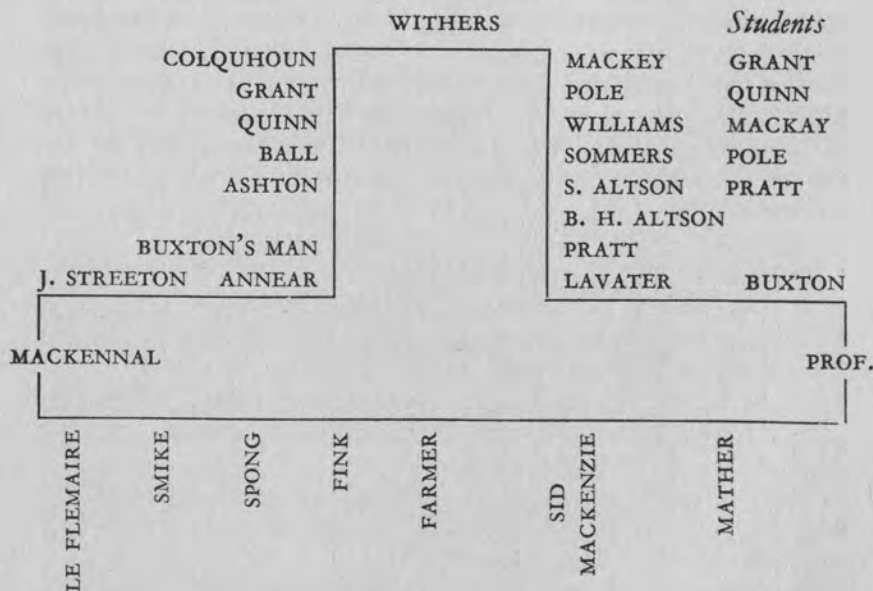
SMIKE TO BULLDOG

Bulldog. He is mainly concerned with some convivial doings, and supplies a diagram showing how the artists and their guests were placed at the table of the Blow-me-tight Supper at the Cathedral Hotel, Melbourne. The names will waken memories of many departed citizens of note in their day. Typical of the times, a picnic was about to be held; our poetic young painter, still in his early twenties, was greatly interested. Roberts's address at the moment was Glebe Hotel, Corowa, N.S.W.

"11 Erin Street,  
Richmond,  
March, 1891.

Dear Bulldog,

The 'Blow-me-tight' Supper to Farmer and Davies last night at Cathedral, 8 p.m.; 27 sat down. I saw Fink and got him.



As soon as Farmer's health was drunk, 4 or 5 gentlemen got up, took their hats and scooted out. I don't think there was a great wit among 'em!—Ball, Ashton, Williams, Moari, Colonel.

## THE "DIVINE SARA"

Soon as they were gone, the thing went right merrily and with a swing, and was quite a success. No one took too much. Fink was better than ever. MacK. very jolly. Sonny Pole, with oratorio on whistle, was very charming. Altogether went off well. I must collect still about 12/-, and then I'll be about square.

I awoke this morning and got up with an extensive thirst at 7 o'clock; drank milk and water, then shower bath and no head at all. In the afternoon went to Austral Salon; Sophie Osmond in all her glory. C.D. and all over the shop. They had lots of pretty people there and some music. Left there about 4 p.m. and wandered slowly and with measured grace down the city, toward Altson's shop.

To-morrow sees the picnic in all its merriment and splendour. I'll be up early to-morrow. This, Bulldog, let me tell you, will be the last rose of summer. Picnics like these may come again, but I doubt if with the simple charm and harmony that has marked ours here. Let's hope for the next wave of students and artists. I see to-morrow hanging like a drop of warm wine from the end of a measure. It's going to drop. Where?

However, I'm getting everyone I know to come; have written to Anna Fraser and her sisters, with invite for 'Pattie Poppy Dobbin.' No doubt the Colonel and Moari will frown heavily at me. I've heard they were dissatisfied with their seats at the supper. What do I care?

Good-bye, old chap. Best wishes for your gem.

SMIKE."

Another decorated epistle is headed by a sketch of, apparently, the famous "Eaglemont." There is no date, of course, but the postmark, while disfiguring one of a series of red-ink drawings on the envelope, shows that it started on its journey to Howlong, N.S.W., on June 8, 1891. The "divine Sara" was visiting Australia just then and appearing at the Princess Theatre, Melbourne. A curious postscript quotes a number of verses of a then popular, and particularly banal, song, "Clementine," and adds, "The evening of Sara's 'La Tosca' some boys started singing 'Clementine.' People did not like it and kicked up a row, but it was a long time to wait and the song was going jolly. Then the Governor came in, orchestra played 'God Save,' all the house standing—and the boys made it 'Jolly Good Fellow.' Such a picnic!"

“Sunday Morning on the  
Hill, Heidelberg.

Dear Bulldog,

I saw Sara Bernhardt in ‘La Tosca’ other evening. She herself is splendid. Oh, grand! I was fool enough to try the 3/- seats—dreadful struggle. Prof. and wife there, also. Bernhardt is going to sit for Mackennal.

Art Union prizes on view at Buxton’s (beastly light). Anson is going to get ‘Sara’ to come and bring a lot of people.

Yesterday afternoon went to V. Orchestra. Grand treat. Mendelssohn’s ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream,’ &c. Fine. Home to tea; back to city with brother Jack. He and I part. I go to Theatre Royal to see Gordon, just over from Sydney—yarn, whisky. Ashton and H. Paterson come up. Ashton and I come away. I give Ashton big apple; several in my pocket. Then he buys sweets for his youngsters and gives me choc-creams. Good-bye. Then meet Dr. Fisher, whisky with him, yarn color and composition Ruysdale, Titian and company (he is going to buy a sketch of mine). While talking to him, see lot of people I know, among them Miss Stokes, Alphington; also the tall damsel of Mdme. Masseran, &c.

Bourke St. crowded; tram runs into Spring St. (Parliament House), water shining on the rails. Sara Bernhardt Orange and Crimson on the summit of Princesses, pretty figures all over the street, past hoardings McIntyre’s pure teas, Halle concerts, and Millais’ Bubbles. Gertrude St., swish down into Smith St. Crowds, Mark Foys, &c., and more pretty figures everywhere, larrikins and all. Beef 2½d. English ale 8/6. Suits 45/-. Wait a moment for Johnston St. tram; watch a man, cart and horse, dealing out hot pies and peas to 4 little boys all hot and kerosene lamp in his face.

Into tram—mother and child, latter fast asleep—lots of pebs and others on C/wood Stn. Take seat. Start to look at my Bernhardt photos., and in comes Ch. Davies, 10.36 train; we yarn as train whizzes off. Richardson, he and I discuss the drama on the rly. bridge at H’berg. Good night—down for a whisky to Old England (it’s cold, rather), then up hill, knock up Whelan.

I jump into bunk, smoke yet again; how many pipes to-day?

This morning nice and fresh, birds about. Calves, chestnut

and white and black, feed. I hear 'em feeding 60 yards off. Bob snoozing on the grass. Salvation Army drums beating in C/wood. Dinner is preparing in the township, judging by the blue smoke—the ranges lovely—all quiet and the earth quite green again.

11.30 Monday morning. 'Bijou Theatre.' Tea at Mrs. Bleeck's house (she is away). Just met Anson; Ashton making sketch of him here. Anson spoke to Sara B. last evening at Coppin's for me. She will come down to Buxton's and bring a crowd. Cartwright (fine actor) is rehearsing a song of his downstairs on stage.

As I said just now, had tea with Mrs. Hitchens and Miss Pattie Dobbin and Laura Fraser and Miss Gill. Giddy little beggars giggling and busting away. Modest Smike quietly busy with cake and cutting bread, &c. Compare notes about Sara with Mrs. H. (Pattie looks thinner and taller, I think; still very pretty and grey eyes, 'so swift in turning'). 'Little more bread, Miss Gill?' 'No, thank you, Mr. Streeton.' 'Piece of cake, so nice.' 'Yes, please,' &c. Miss G. off to church, remainder yarn with me and inspect Mrs. B. volumes of London views, &c. Miss Patty reads a book in one night as a rule, she says. I recommend her 'Les Miserables.' Smike rises to go at 8.30. Mrs. H. suggests whisky—*hot*. It was jolly good.

In again to town this morning, with berries, gorse and she-oak (in bloom). The she-oak trees are splendid, covered with bloom of powdered chesnut. Oh, lovely, lovely; and it reminds me whilst recruiting my health in the Australian hills last Xmas, I picked some skeleton gum leaves and placed them against the chestnut tresses of someone close by (little different texture, that's all). Received a polite whack on the back for my being so 'familiar.'

Yours truly,

SMIKE."

Postage between colonies was twopence at this period and each colony issued its own stamps. Those on the next envelope disclose New South Wales as its place of origin and the post-marks gives the date December 29, 1891. T.R. was then in the Curlew Camp at Mosman's Bay.



"Tuesday.

Dear Bdg.,

A prosperous and good New Year for you and all Australian artists. I'm off to the mountains for last time this afternoon; collect my properties and back to Sydney by to-morrow. Thence to office for Str. ticket to Melbourne by, if possible, Saturday's 'Barcoo' when the bally tide comes in.

I lay on the paddle box coming home from Manly last night, the soft, dark breath of the harbour playing through my hair uncovered. There were hardly any old people on board, although she was crowded. No! Youth everywhere. 'Shepherds close nestling to their sweethearts in the soft, warm, salty air.' All seemed a dream. Just like a long, sad, soothing melody.

My chief companions through this Christmastide have been the diarrhoea, brandy-bottle, and the memory of last Christmas.

'And where shall we go for our garlands glad,  
At the falling of the year?'

Yours,

SMIKE."

He is at Richmond, Victoria and once more using the "beautiful foreign paper" (the sheets were foolscap size, each adorned with a color print of a flower) when he wrote the next letter. The faithful postmark repairs the omission of a date—March 9, 1892.

"And how goes it with the old Bulldog, who once again watcheth the grand entrance to Sydney Harbour with those full, capable orbs of his which (don't mind the simile) can pierce the deepest gloom like a common or garden Tom Cat?"

I'll leave the news business till a bit later. To-night has seen me on various tram dummies (Richmond to City and City to St. Kilda—and back—and back). And coming back one transfers and there being no tram in sight for the City, we cut into a hotel at the 'Junction'; first to warm me a bit and ward off the usual smells of drainage and ironclads, &c., and secondly, and on the spur of the moment as it were, to drink to the health and beauty of the fair one who dispenses from behind the bar, and who seems about 18 or 19, and with her good, honest-looking face was somewhat interesting—and yet! Lord, who can tell what underlies a wealth of brown tresses and deep, electric eyes?

She's never been painted and would be glad for me to make a sketch of her. And, warmed up, I seek my trusty tram and flee through the cool night in the city for home. What will become of me? I do wonder. I must work more, think of Michael-angelo, and if there's anything in me, put it forth.

'Who buys a minute's mirth.' Well, we'll see. I won't be longer in Melbourne than I can help.

Bernard Hall was to arrive to-day. I've seen J. Ashton. We, together, washed down the dust with a bottle of 'Foster's', for to-day has been a hell of a day.

Am going to a picnic next Saturday; tennis and dancing, and so on, at Blackburn.

I've just read the 'City of Dreadful Night' (Kipling); very fine, too. Next Friday I go to see Anson in 'Caste,' with Leitch. (Cole to-day hoped I wasn't going to set up as a portrait painter; not fair being a landscape man between ourselves, &c.) However, I'll take heart and make a start, for faint heart never won fair lady.

And now I'm off to bed to think, and think well over everything in time.

The Governor wishes to be kindly remembered to Bulldog and hopes you'll be well appreciated in Sydney. His temperament, like mine, is much better without the routine and hurry of office work.

Best of wishes to the old Sydney fellows, please. They are good, well-meaning chaps.

Good-night,

SMIKE."

Although expecting Roberts to return to Melbourne immediately (Streeton is writing from the Grosvenor Chambers studio on February 3, 1892), he chances another letter to the Mosman address. Evidently the presidency of the Victorian Artists' Society was a matter of debate. Panton, well-known as a patron of art, held the post at one time, but generally the feeling in the Society favoured the seat being occupied by a practising artist.

"Dear Bdg.,

When are you coming back? Dick said you'd be back 1st week in Feb. So I expect you this afternoon, to-morrow, or

any day. Cole finished and cleared out. He's going to take this good old studio, also Walton's; going to live here.

I'm finishing Fisher's portrait for £10, and I think it's getting on pretty fairly just now. Minns and Mrs. Minns have been up two or 3 times, and lots of other people. Yesterday Lottie and Dora Fraser were up to see my picture and in the afternoon Anna and another damsel and two musical boys, firm friends of G. W. L. Marshall Hall. 'Twas really so nice to see Anna trotting about your studio, and 'Smike' this, and 'I say, Smike,' and 'Smike' all over the shop doing the showman business. Got burnt sienna on her gloves and all sorts of larks. Truly she is a charming girl.

Have been few times out to the college. The Prof. likes my picture. I spent very happy afternoon and evening there. Mrs. Prof. looking A1.

Several Art Unions on here since we left—'Australian Natives,' 'Students' Art Union,' and 'Withers' Art Union.' They'll overdo it, I'm afraid. Met a great friend of Kipling here; he says that the afternoon he was in Sydney he spent all the time fishing with a little boy at Circular Quay. I've just finished the 'African Farm' (Olive Schreiner); grand book. Your picture looks splendid in the studio—very fine.

I'm not sure this will reach you before you start for Melb. I felt so fine and brown and well when I left the 'Aramac,' but, oh, the dam'd town pulls one down soon. It's not the natural proper life, somehow.

Panton is a good old sort, but is not the man for President. He's no enthusiast and has no pictures like C. S. Paterson, Fink, or F. Stuart. I moved that a meeting be called to vote on an artist to place on the Trust. They are slow, and I fancy will try to shelve the thing, but I'll bring it on again.

Yours,

SMIKE."

Two notes headed "Commercial Hotel, Mittagong," were written, specifically, on "Wednesday" and "Sunday." Smike was there in November, 1892, and Roberts was at Paling's Buildings, George Street, Sydney. The sketches in the text include a speaking likeness of Professor Marshall Hall.

## MITTAGONG

“Dear Bulldog,

Many thanks for the wire; so sorry my last was not more explicit. However, I've everything I want just now. Have been 4 or 5 days on a picture from the summit of a huge precipice called the Gib (Gibraltar). This picture I wish to make chiefly remarkable for its delicate coloring, and to that end have climbed the aforesaid rock (400 or 500 feet up) 5 times and down again, after a walk of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles from the township. However, have done my best, and have, I think, already made the picture. Much my best commencement for a picture in water-color paints. Mittagong is beautifully surrounded by high and rocky hills. There are about 4 or 5 churches, 4 or 5 public houses, a blacksmith's shop, store, etc., etc. It has been before observed by some competent individual that the traveller may even see the light flashing at the Sydney Heads, the same which is a guiding star to the brave mariner steering homewards o'er the rolling midnight deep.

This is a vile place for drink—2 or 3 fellows tight as owls before breakfast.

The balls are smashing round the billiard table; someone is banging a waltz out of the old piano, and the loud voice of the country drunkard challenges the whole b—y room to do battle (myself included, no doubt). Even the old man, the Boss, is on the Toot (will paint a picture of him if possible). He gives the 'Pub' dog Spot a root and a kick out of the room, and the marker says 'Cannon off the white! Four to go! 40 plays 27.' 'B—y good shot, Bill,' and the dirty old cockatoo grinds his bill and tries to get to sleep, poor bird. Then the 'old bird' has another nip of 'Geneva,' and his wife, Maria, chivies him round with many frowns. He drops his hat over his eyes. 'Darn good shot, old bird! Put the red in the bottom hole! 'S' all right, Maria.'

The girls in the parlor playing dominoes, and the Frenchman (carpenter) crosses his legs and smokes his cigarettes of 'Derby.' Marker looks tired; more drinks, more pints of tanglefoot. I am excused on the plea of liver complaint, etc.

When can you come? 'Tis a beautiful country—3,000 feet up.

Yours,

SMIKE.”

"Dear Bdg.,

Good biz. Come. You'll enjoy it. I had a long walk to-day. Wild flowers, oh, splendid, with the waratah. By Jove, to collect it is an intoxication; and I hold the sole copyright to paint the 'Waratah Gatherer.'

Ay, and ferns; all sorts, and plenty of coral. Coral fern! How it takes one back! Some of it is dry and of an exquisite chestnut color. How I placed it once against a lady's hair to discover the faintest change in the beautiful color of each.

To-night is quiet here. No fights or rows on, no billiards. Not bad here! £1 a week and nice people. The boss's eldest son is very decent chap and shows me round very kindly.

The stretcher I'm working on, old man, so bring a canvas for your paper, and have a go in. By the way, all my cigars that I brought are run out—you might bring half a dozen or so, and I'll mind 'em. Will help you to smoke 'em. I say this quite in an unselfish way—your health would suffer did you smoke 'em all.

Yes, come, if you can. I'll be at the station when she comes in here—about 7.30 or 8.

Yours,

MR. SMIKE."

When he returned from the Blue Mountains Smike lived for a time at Erin Street, Richmond. The letter which follows was written there on 13th May, 1892. He adorned it with several drawings—an interior view of Roberts's studio with a woman entering, a self-portrait in which he appears trussed up by a very active Cupid while four sheep regard him quizzically, and several other sketches.

"It's so pleasant painting in your studio; particularly so yesterday.

Yes, the Fitzroy Gardens are splendid in color.

I fancy I have several little details of interest for you.

Last Saturday worked in your studio until dark. Then lit the gas and started to peg away at your organ. (Thinking that Miss Sutherland and all were gone.) Am trying to learn first page of 'Largo.' Worked with considerable vigour till about 6.30 or 7 p.m., turned off gas, locked up, and—found Miss Sutherland at her door, lot of people apparently inside, listening

## SMOKE NIGHT

to organ and awaiting the grand finale, so they asked me to tea. I was much surprised and thanked 'em for invitation and went home to tea 7.30 about.

8 p.m. SMOKE NIGHT. Water tank. The best *Smoke Night* we've had (F. Neete (actor) in chair).

D. Christie Murray (author)	Dr. O'Hara
Gee (singer)	Proffr. Kernot
Stockwell	Liebe
Hamilton Clarke	Max Klein
Langdale	Doyle and others
Lawson	Snazelle

Murray gave a recitation about 2 minutes, which roused the whole room and every man shook with applause—'The Federal Convention.' Very fine; struck every one.

I caught the last train to Heidelberg, wet night and dark. Could not get Withers away (married man). Heidelberg Station met Mrs. Bleeck going home with young damsel; also C. Davies. Escorted Mrs. B. home, then up hill, pile all the blankets over me, and the room cosy and fragrant with eucalyptus and ruby twist. Get up, breakfast 10.30, paint 2 impressions (for Art Union), and then have another meal at 4 o'clock. 5 p.m. dark and cool. I consult the compass—needle points to 'Carn.' I walk over very slowly, open the several gates and seat myself close to the fire and get warm. Have quite a nice, long, interesting chat. I trot away. Home with a whisky (am getting a cold). It is only about 9 p.m., and I don't want to go home yet, so I call in and see Edmund Smith; red house with tiles next Mrs. Bleeck. He has one splendid room there and one or 2 charming lovely little watercolors by Mather. 2 whiskies and then home.

Into town next morning, 8.40 train, with all the genius of H'Berg and Mike the guard to take care of us all.

Yesterday 2 girls came up to studio in afternoon, and one, of course, was particularly interesting. Really, Bulldog, looked so fine. I was so cheerful for the rest of the day (Mather was up), and then the dear old Prof. He is a gem, really, and I read my Wordsworth to him.

Well, this little matter seems to develop, and really I've done nothing suddenly, as per the advice of my esteemed friend, the Old Bulldog.

The Sunday before last I went in evening to Vict. College and

saw everyone but Dora, who was away. Anna took my hand and led me into room, where poor Lexy was lying down unwell. I was so sorry to see her like this. They were describing your letter to me; it afforded them great entertainment.

All this letter seems about myself. But, you see, 'there's a tide in the affairs of men,' sometimes. Sandes was up to-day; the wreck he went to see quite inspired him (I must read it). Miss Osmond has been up, and Madame Reverdy, 'Age' critic; Mr. Jas. Smith not yet to hand.

I have still 5 more prizes to paint to make the 30 I'm giving. I think 'twill go all right. It must, that's all. It means my next work in a measure. I would like to do 'The Australian Vintage' up at Stawell or Gt. Western, grapes of Purple and Gold 'glory.'

Re Art Union, I must fix a date for drawing. It will mean a deal in getting off tickets. Tuesday, 30th June, will do, I think. It leaves me 5 weeks (when all is ready) to get tickets off.

You must get down in time for 'Bernhardt,' and come with me. I'll let you know when she opens.

'When the flowing tide comes in.'

Good-night,

SMIKE."

People mentioned in a communication written at Highbury Grove, Kew (Vic.), in October, 1892, include Sir George Verdon, then President of the National Gallery Trustees, and Mrs. Bleek, an art patron who had been hospitable to the dwellers of the Eaglemont camp. . . . Phil May's *The Parson and the Painter* appeared as a paper-covered folio, price one shilling, about this time. . . . The new Director of the Gallery was Bernard Hall, who had taken office in March of that year; he was destined to hold the post for a very long period. "Mr. Fidgen" appears to be a bad shot at the Rev. W. H. Fitchett, who became a Trustee just then. *An Australian Aboriginal* and *Eileen* were the two heads bought by Sydney that year. The first sale of *Golden Summer* is here recorded.

The opening is explained by the fact that Roberts was away on a yachting trip along the Great Barrier Reef.

*Swift hail to thee  
fast friend and wanderer,  
Swift as message from the far-darting Apollo.*

## “GOLDEN SUMMER” SOLD

How are you? Two letters and *The Parson and the Painter*, by May, do follow you floating 'mid the 'spicy isles of coral, palm and pearl.' How can you expect the postal science to keep step with your winged flight, like to a gurnet cutting through the breakers of the ocean blue?

Your first was a very long time arriving down here. Yes, sold *Golden Summer*, and dear old 'K.' sent out the notices, and a week ago came the 'Hon. Mention' (Societe des Artistes Francais), etc., a large sheet parchment signed by President Bonnat.

And you've sold two heads to the Gallery. I am so glad, and the Prof. and all. Good Bldg. My congratulations are floating all round the Torres Straits.

Thrown up Grosvenor Chambers, our people live out here, nice place, next to Williamson's. Been digging in the garden lately and reading a good deal. Mr. Bernard Hall gave an At Home yesterday afternoon at his studio (Gallery). He sent me an invitation; Marshall Hall one, too, but he did not turn up—and this little chap was so foolish and so inartistic as to omit to send the Prof. a card. Most caddish. Damn him. Verdon was there, swinging his fat person around. Panton and I standing in the centre of the room harangued at length of the matter of duty on pictures (I think that was the subject).

I think the thing was a frost, but still there was afternoon tea and sponge cake, etc., and the people most interesting. I enjoyed it, rather.

'May I bring you a cup of tea, Miss Spong?' 'Oh, thank you, Mr. Streeton.' I cross to the teacups and call briskly, 'Tea one.' The girls behind look up amazed at the want of decorum and then explode and vanish in giggles, and passing the noble and flowing figure of Sir George Verdon I nearly explode into a loud guffaw myself under the nose of that bold and stalwart knight. Would have given anything to have been able to prod him in the ribs. Catani was there, naturally. Spong, wife and daughter. Spong is a shallow, sceptical chap. No other artists.

After I had done my share I sloped away and went down to the Don's new house to tea, and afterwards the 1st movement of the 'Pastoral' Symphony and some of the 1st Symphony. Oh, grand. Just fitted as an antidote for the Vict. Artists'



meeting I went to an hour after; 1st I've been to since about 2 months. They had a general meeting about putting an artist on the Trust at the Gallery—the very matter which I moved when you were in Melb. and was shelved by them. Mather seemed to be rounding people up to this meeting, etc., but I did not turn up; had no interest in it whatever. In the last voting it lay between Mather and Richardson.

The Trustee newly appointed to the Natl. Gallery is a Mr. Fidge, or some such name, master of the Ladies' Methodist College, Glenferrie. Still, this is only natural. The Prof. and I look on the whole art question here in the only reasonable and contenting way—from a pessimistic point of view.

And now about Sydney—dam it. I'll run up soon as I can. Have to get some money yet owing from Mrs. Bleeck, and also finish a decoration job in a dentist's studio or shop in Collins St.; it is a la Caffyn's *A Poppy's Tears*. Will write you again in a day or two. Did you ever receive the P.O. order for £3 I sent to Paling's Buildings with the flake white?

Yours,

SMIKE."

In a letter a week later (it is postmarked 12th October, 1892), the artist recalls with relish his retort to the Trustees of the Melbourne National Gallery when, in reply to his invitation to view his *Golden Summer*, they thanked him, but did nothing more. The text of his reply was: "I should be obliged if you would convey to the Trustees my hearty thanks for the interest they have taken in the matter." He had cause for genuine thankfulness in later days that they had not bought the picture. His first price was 100 guineas. It was destined to advance his fortunes notably, for it was that canvas which earned the "Mention Honorable" of the Paris Salon and was finally sold at a record price.

References are common in these unpublished letters to well-known social figures of the day, men and women who were not artists but very much interested in art. Prominent were Mr. J. A. Panton, the Police Magistrate, who for a time was President of the Victorian Artists' Society, and Mr. Theodore Fink, a lay member of that Society, who was to become a close friend of Phil May and Blamire Young.

AFFECTION FOR "THE PROF."

From 53 Highbury Grove, Smike again addressed his "Dear Bulldog" at Paling's Buildings, George Street, Sydney, some time in 1892:

"This is Tuesday. Well, I must away this day week 'Barcoo'; can't go before very well. A dentist is coming out here next Sunday and I think I may sell him a sketch or two. This is required, because all business with Mrs. Bleeck is over, and I had been relying on receiving a chq. for £25. Painted one picture little dog; recd. £10 for it. 2nd picture 2 larger dogs, larger canvas, price, etc.

Had the old Prof. up last evening, went down to his place and fetched him. He was in the blues about his director. It seems he is somewhat narked or jealous of the Prof.'s well-known popularity with all the students. However, the students all love the Prof.

Down at Spong's on Sunday evening. M. M. Hall, Cosgrove, Lawrence, Greenaway, &c. All well. Miss S. pouring out the tea and looking very charming; she's only a young maid, but seems to wish to appear older—a woman, an actress of experience, and I think she's hardly natural enough just now. Yes, she looked very pretty.

I have no lady now to divide the affection I have for my brother artists. Heigh Ho. Dam good job, blow me it is. Reading of Wagner and Beethoven lately has done me good. By Jove I'll have such a good go in at the pictures this summer to come of 1892. By the by, the Prof.'s big picture of the *Little Girl Found* is finished and is a very, very fine picture—simple and so natural and free from brushwork. Splendid. I am as glad as possible. Oh, he is a good chap—the only deep man here with M. Hall.

Kew is filled with a thousand perfumes just now—stocks, mignonette, wallflowers.

Tucker has some pupils. But I think he has the blues a bit, poor old chap. Fox arrives next week.

Picture of Longstaff's on view at Fletcher's—*Mother and Child*—very nice and clean painting and looks very charming; he is very clever chap. It seems rather uniform or thin, but it doesn't matter how one paints, etc., I suppose. Aby Altson's work is thin in the same way, I think.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

Hoping I may do a deal next Sunday and leave by Tuesday's boat—and that you are well.

Yours,

SMIKE."

Three notes, undated, are undoubtedly of the 1892 vintage. All are headed Erin Street, Richmond, and are addressed to Roberts at Saunders' boatshed. Of the new names mentioned, most of the owners belonged to the Brough and Boucicault Comedy Company. Davies was probably the David Davies who painted the famous *Moonrise*, owned by the Melbourne Gallery; Folingsby was the former head of the Gallery school.

"Saturday,  
Erin St.

Dear Bulldog,

How do you feel, old chap? Getting on grand with your picture, I hope. Last 3 days here have been *hot* straight from the north; must be splendid in the country. I've spent the entire week seeing people away. Selfish to say so, perhaps, but it's a horrible waste of time, and we have so little time. This afternoon, I think, sees all this bother gone. Then, perhaps, I'll have a rest and a think. *Yes, the enjoyment of your own thought.*

Last evening I went with brother Jack and brother-in-law to theatre, 'Skipped by the Light of the Moon,' and did not enjoy it much. On the way down town our tram met with accident. Cabby was tight, poor chap. I was sitting on dummy. Conductor rang bell, but he ran his wheel right into front rail of dummy. I jumped up and kept toward centre of dummy. The force of shock bent all the front nearly 3 feet, close to my seat on side; hansom was pitched into the air about 6 feet really and landed flop on left side; cabby pitched out, cab smashed along the street. Poor cabby lying in the dusty road with people all gaping at him. I lifted him up, and finding he was not very badly hurt, handed him over to the mob.

Just had lunch and back from Williamstown and Queen's Whf., seeing my sister off to Sydney. Spong, Mrs. S. and Miss Hilda Spong, Anson, Miss Seccombe, who looked very pretty and bright, and Miss Spong looked very fine and charming. Brough and all the rest. As I told Miss Seccombe, all the talent

PLANS ART UNION

seems to leave Victoria just how. She smiled prettily and seemed quite pleased.

Really, Bulldog. You're away (N.S.W.), poor old Walton dead, K. gone to Paris, Farmer, Davies and Miss Davies to Paris—The B. & B. Company all off. My dear sister gone to-day. Fink going in a week or so (banquet to him on 12th, £2/2/-, which, of course, shuts out the painters). Folingsby dead. My father and mother go to Sydney on Tuesday next.

I shall sit on our balcony—let me see, it's 3 p.m. now—from 3 till 6 and think with my pipe; really can't do anything else; have some tea and then out again, and, by jove, I'll think the rest of the night.

Have been thinking ever since.

Spent yesterday afternoon with old Ford and his organ at Ivanhoe. A nice change; did not go near the camp.

Yours truly,

SMIKE."

The next introduces a fresh note. He is very lonely, reading much, smoking constantly and brooding upon the seeming impossibility of ever having enough money to go abroad, as he so earnestly desires to do. So we get:

"Dear Bulldog,

I have an idea; let me know what you think, will you? In order to raise the wind to enable me to pay my creditors and get away, someone proposes an Art Union of my pictures. Pictures I have on hand (and could finish), *Spring* and others, put together would amount to the sum of over £220. Suppose I put it in the hands of a man who knows how to work and give him £20 out of it. I have a great number of friends who can't buy my work but who *might* take a 10/- ticket. People do gamble a bit. What do you think?

SMIKE."

And this follows soon afterwards. The Art Union ticket duly had a reproduction on it of the *Spring Pastoral*. There were 30 prizes and they were on view at Buxton's Art Gallery, Swanston Street, Melbourne.

"Wedy.

Dear Bulldog,

Re my Art Union. Buxton will look after it for me. After consultation with him and another man who has run these lotteries, I have decided to make tickets 5/-, print 'em in books of 10, and anyone who sells 9 has the remaining chance. Calvert will produce for me a good block (about 8 inches of the biggest and most important picture), which shall be on every ticket. I want to raise £300 if possible.

1st Prize: *Spring Pastoral*.

2nd: *Lavender Bay, Sydney*.

including also sketch of the 8 Hours Demonstration and other small things I'm painting for the purpose—about 30 prizes.

1200 at 5/-: Picture on each ticket.

Some man wants to run an art lottery for the Society and the committee met him last night to discuss, I believe. However, that shall not affect my scheme.

For past month or two I've not been able to get at my work properly, which monotonous state of things filled me with a desire to get out of Melb., and Paris came into my head.

No, I'm not a bit tired of Australia.

No, have not been disappointed exactly, either.

I want to stay *here*, but not in Melb. If I can raise this coin I intend to go straight inland (away from all polite society), and stay there 2 or 3 years and create some things entirely new, and try and translate some of the great hidden poetry that I know is here, but have not seen or felt it.

It all seems to me like an immense bright sky enveloped in a wonderful mist waiting to be pierced here and there and have the glory of a "milky way" of modern intellect.

Mather and Withers are both teaching in Melb.

Sydney will run into my tickets, I think. Mullens are sold out of 'The Light that Failed.' I'm sorry. If I get one will send it up. I returned Charrington the copy he lent me. It's very, very great.

SMIKE."

Somewhere about 1892 John Ford Paterson, one of the leading painters of the day, revisited his native Scotland. Streeton tells of the farewell supper the artist community gave him. Amongst others present were John Mather, also well known

## SUPPER TO JOHNNY PATERSON

as a Councillor of the Victorian Artists' Society, and James Smith, the *Argus* art critic, who had so drastically slated the famous 9 x 5 exhibition which the Eaglemont group staged in Melbourne in 1889. He had described the exhibits as "incoherent" (shades of the present-day contemporaries!), and said that four-fifths of them were "a pain to the eye." The Sandes who lost his overcoat was probably John Sandes, of the *Argus*, one of the first and most capable contributors to the "Passing Show" column of that paper.

Grosvenor Chambers were near the east end of Collins Street, Melbourne. Roberts had his studio there for a time.

It is interesting to note the presence of a "Labour member" at the supper to Paterson. The Labour Party, in Victoria anyway, was then just four strong. John Hancock, an eloquent speaker, had been elected to the Legislative Assembly as representative of Collingwood in 1891, and he had, as two of his colleagues in the House, Dr. William Maloney and that forceful fighter, W. A. Trenwith.

"Grosvenor Chambers,  
Thursday.

Dear Blg.,

Got yours from the Blue Mountains.

A supper last night at Cafe Anglais to Johnny Paterson. Panton was unwell and could not turn up. Fink took the chair. Did it very well. Paterson's health, next Australian Art, responded to by Mather and Smith. The toast was proposed very well by Mr. Hancock (Labour member); great fun. Then Future Parliaments by Murphy (another Labor man), and responded to by Julius Hertz and Fletcher (the picture dealer). Then Marshall Hall, the breezy Hall, responds to the health of the turf, and did it right splendidly.

Monday.

Saw Johnny off Saturday. Aytoun and I searched the whole ship for half an hour, and it never struck us to look in the bar, where he was, naturally. Some parson or Wesleyan was going, too, and lot of people commenced wailing a hymn and a jackass in a case on the bulwarks commenced and continued to laugh very vigorously. Such fun, and it seemed so strange the poor

bird out of its element and yet chirping mid all the confusion.

Hall's orchestra in the afternoon, and then down to tea—after, the Prof. and wife, Don, Mdme. Steinhauer Mouchette and others. Fine time. Prof. singing, &c., &c. I've been down there last 3 Saturdays. He is a delightful man, I think—the Prof. beginning to think so, too.

Sandes was out for a "toot" one night and lost his overcoat with the translation of K.'s criticism in the French.

Had a lot of fellows up here last Friday—Prof. and wife, Hall, Don, Spong, Dr. Meyer, Barnett, Burgess, &c. I've seen Hall's work. Of course, they are all old pictures and sketches, but I expected rather more of him, because he seems to have pretty good judgment and thought. However, I'll wait and see something he does here; he may be a better teacher than a painter. He is pretty strong at argument. Still, that never built a fire or made a picture. However, I'll back the old Prof. 'gainst all the chaps that come here to paint Australia. I hear Mackennal is having a hard time, poor chap.

I got the 'Great Musical Composers,' 1/- at Coles, and it is very good. Beethoven must have suffered and enjoyed more than any man. Many thanks for reminding me of the book. Also got 'Great English Painters.' I'm trying to make everyone read 'Far from the Madding Crowd' (Gabriel and Bathsheba). I'd like to paint that in England some day. Wish we could go together some day—would be fine, eh? Well, I'll keep the idea before me. How's your health?

I'm off this week to Berwick to work at the two £10 commissions I have—think I'll get more now. Started another head lately of a girl at the theatre. I've seen her books; she reads Swinburne, Browning, Shelley, Byron, and so on—has a head full of character; strongly amorous. Said she knew K. slightly. By Gosh, I'll beware this lot. Have made a splendid start in an hour and a half; have almost a mind not to touch it again—she smokes a good deal . . . ?

The papers have been booming us a bit. I'll send you some. Write again soon to

Yours,

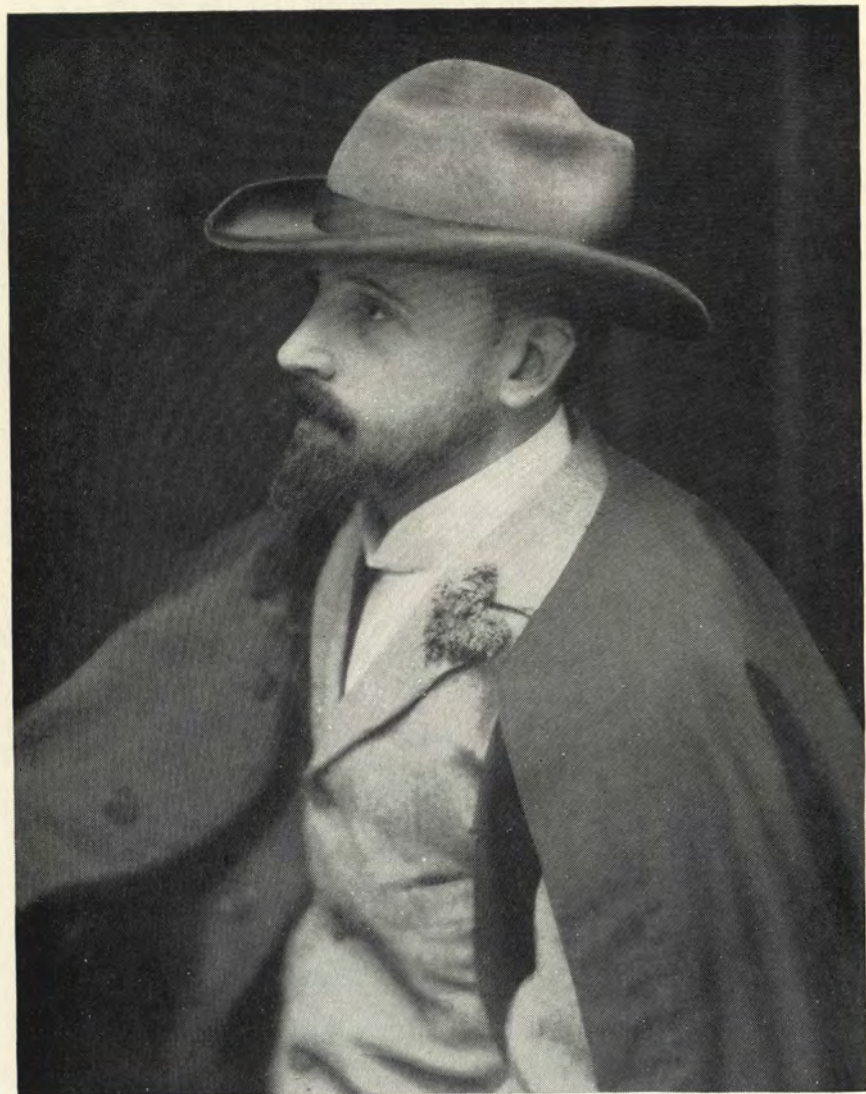
SMIKE."

Three letters from Professor Marshall Hall come in about



Plate 1. SIR ARTHUR STREETON: Golden Summer. Oil, in the possession of Mrs. Mackenzie, Trawalla, Victoria





*Talma Photograph*

Plate 2. STREETON: Between the ages of 25 and 30.  
Photographed in Melbourne about 1895, before his first departure for England

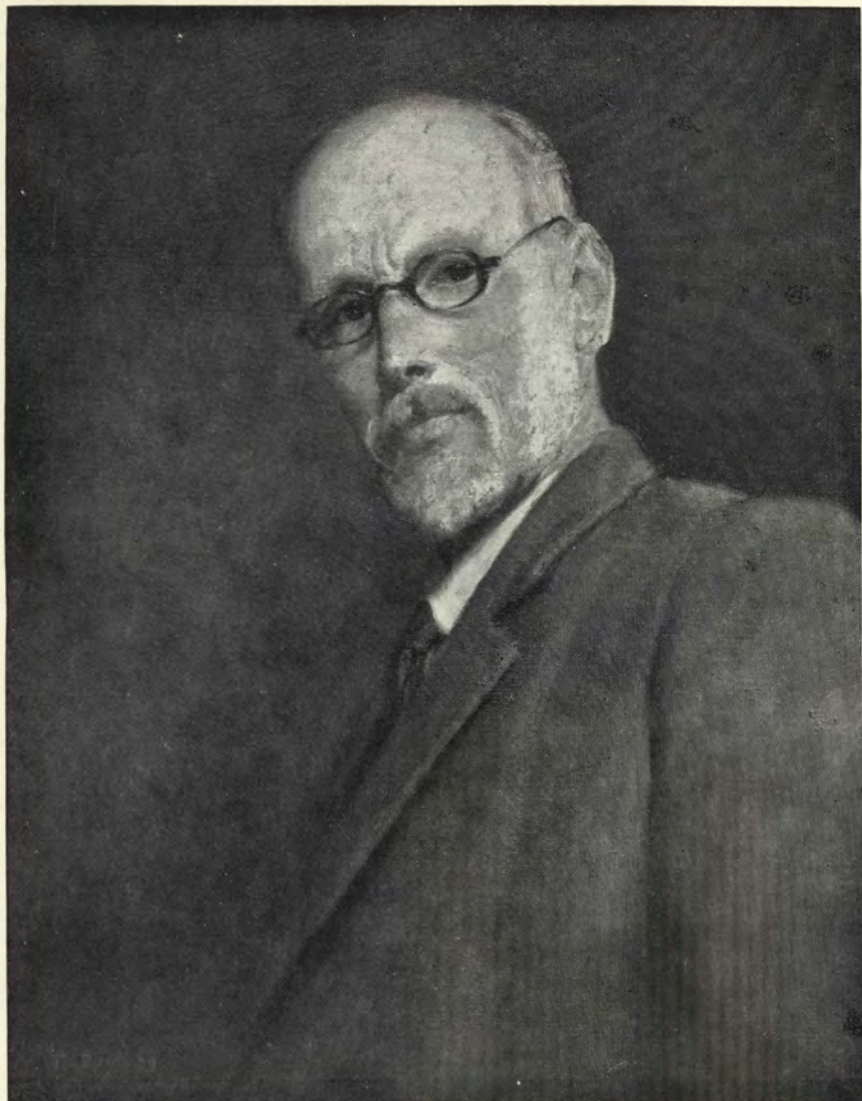


Plate 3. TOM ROBERTS : Self Portrait. Oil

From the original in the National Art Gallery of N.S.W., by permission of the Trustees



Plate 4. CHARLES CONDER : The Farm, Richmond, N.S.W. Oil



Plate 5. SIR ARTHUR STREETON: Study for "Fire's On." Watercolour  
From the original in the National Art Gallery of N.S.W., by permission of the Trustees  
Presented to the Gallery by Howard Hinton, Esq., O.B.E.

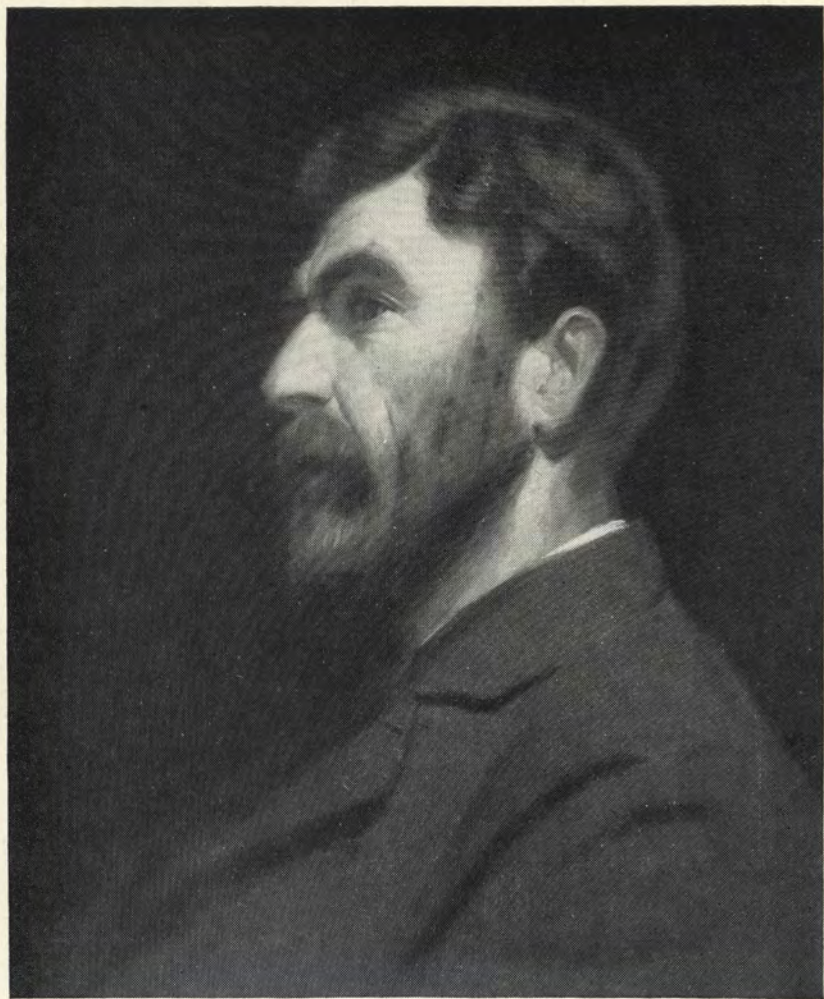
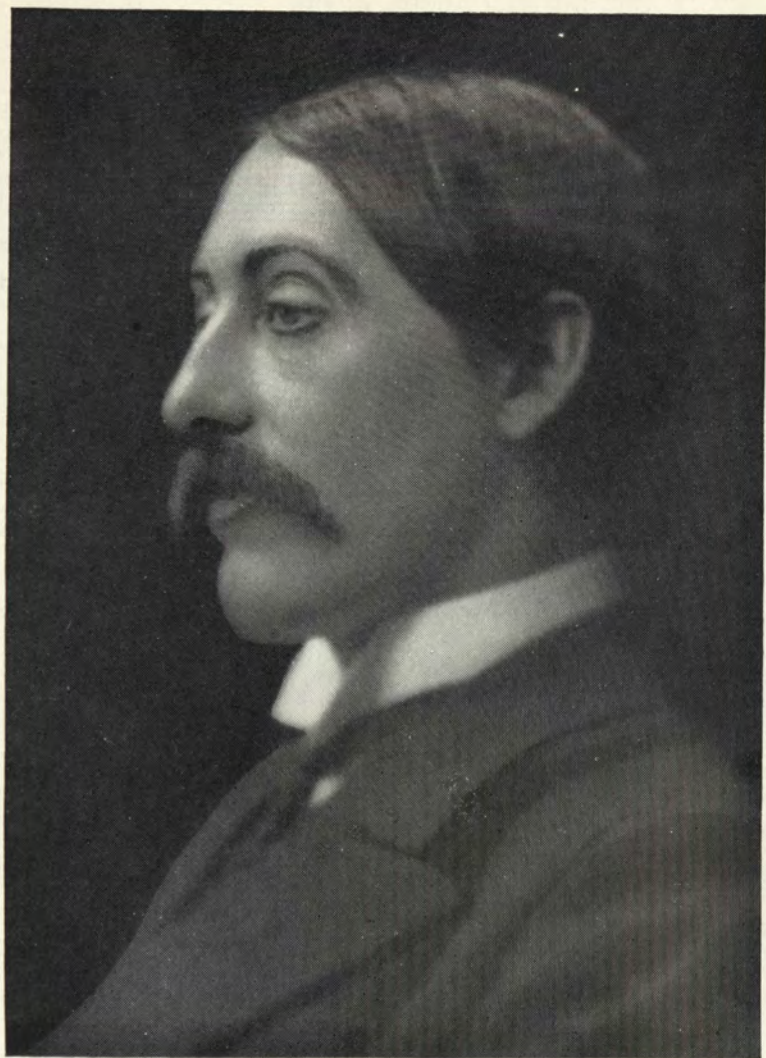


Plate 6. TOM ROBERTS : Portrait of Professor Marshall Hall. Oil



*H. Walter Barnett, London. Photograph*

Plate 7. CHARLES CONDER : After he returned to London from Australia



Plate 8. SIR ARTHUR STREETON : The Red Gum Tree. Oil. From the collection of the late Dame Marie Tempest

Plate 9.  
SIR ARTHUR  
STREETON:  
The Valley. Oil





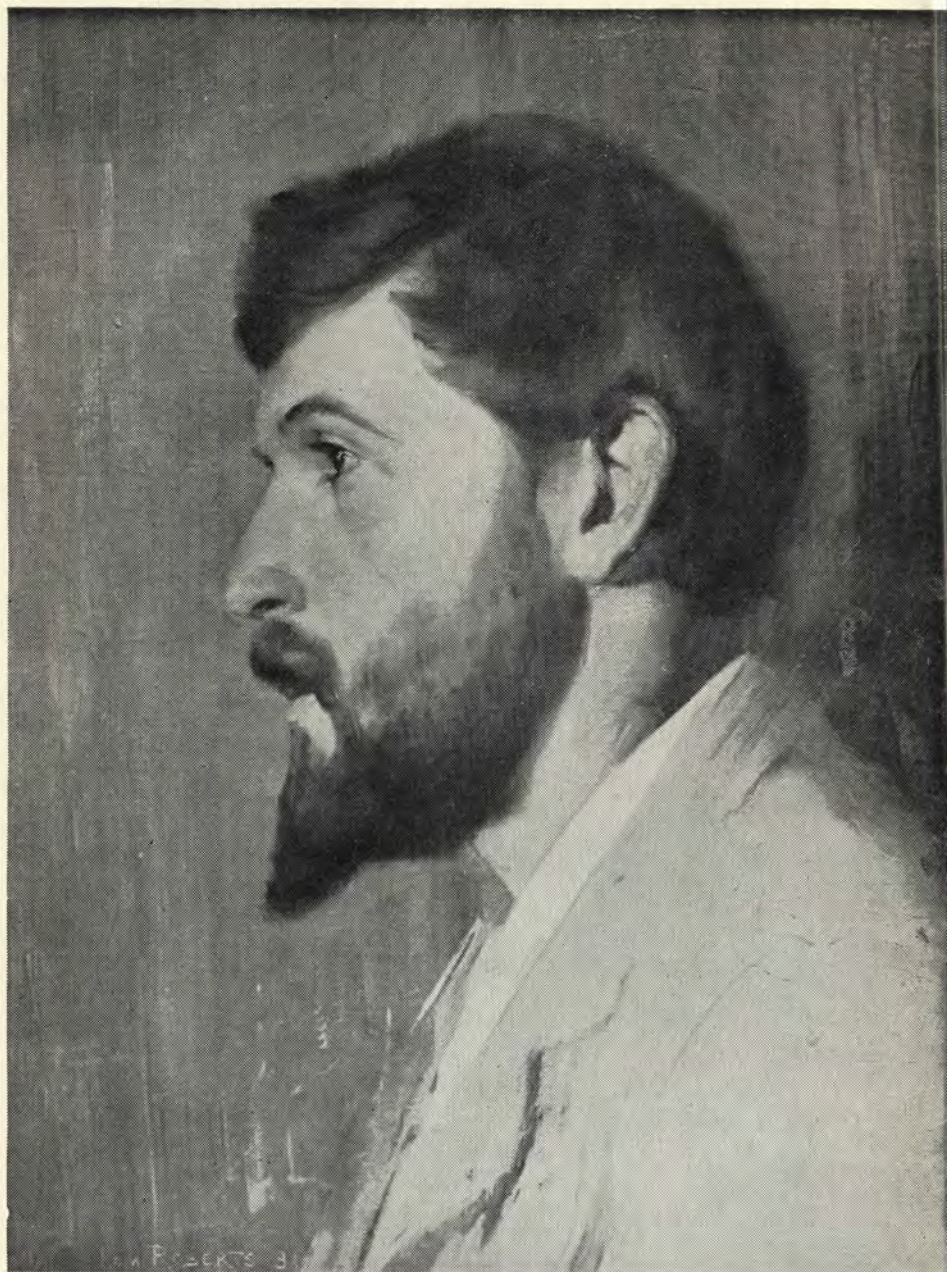


Plate 10. TOM ROBERTS: Streeton as a Young Man. Oil  
From the original in the National Art Gallery of N.S.W., by permission of the Trustees

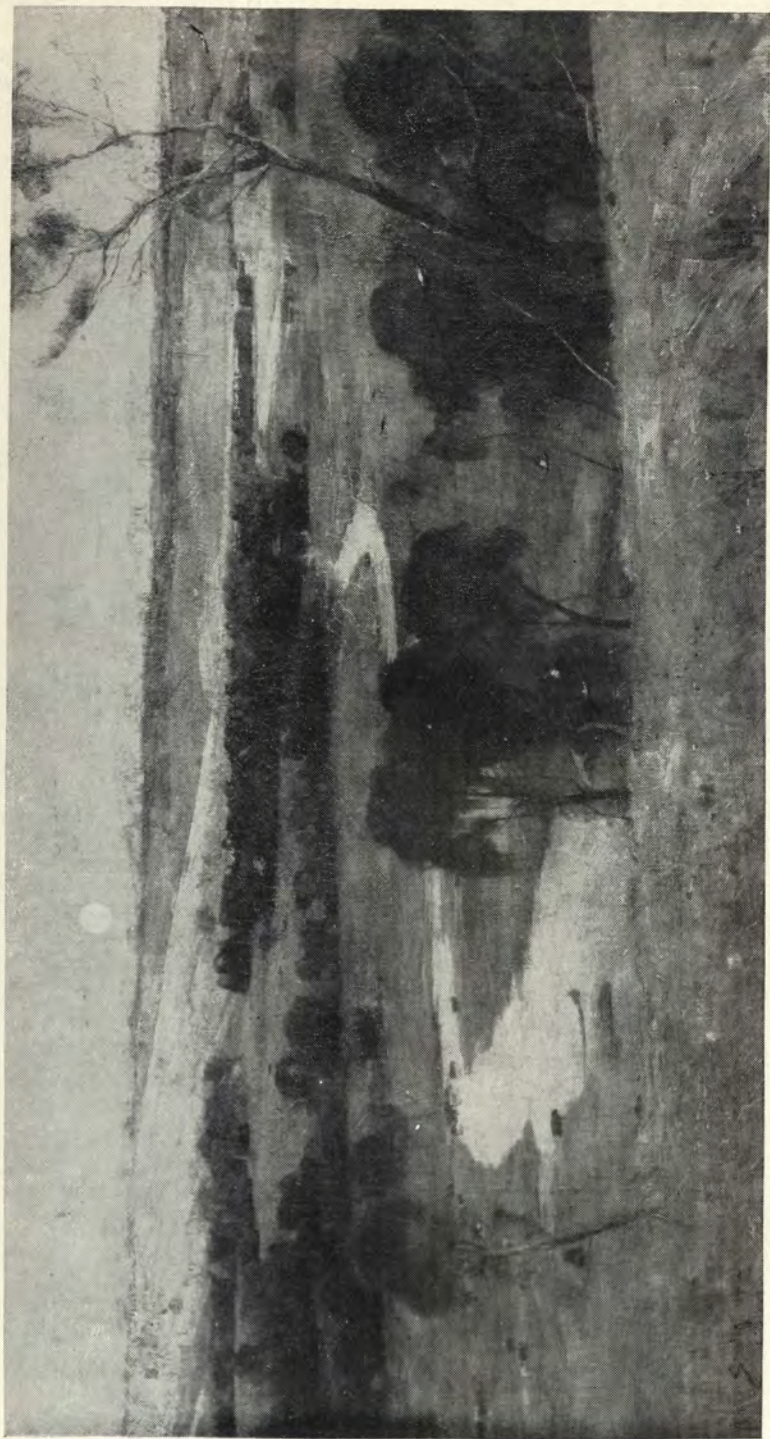


Plate 11. SIR ARTHUR STREETON: Still Glides the Stream. Oil  
From the original in the National Art Gallery of N.S.W., by permission of the Trustees





Plate 13. SIR ARTHUR STREETON : Sydney Harbour from North Shore. Oil  
In the possession of Sir Harry Moxham, Sydney



Plate 14. SIR ARTHUR STREETON: Malham Cove. Oil.  
From the original in the National Art Gallery of N.S.W., by permission of the Trustees

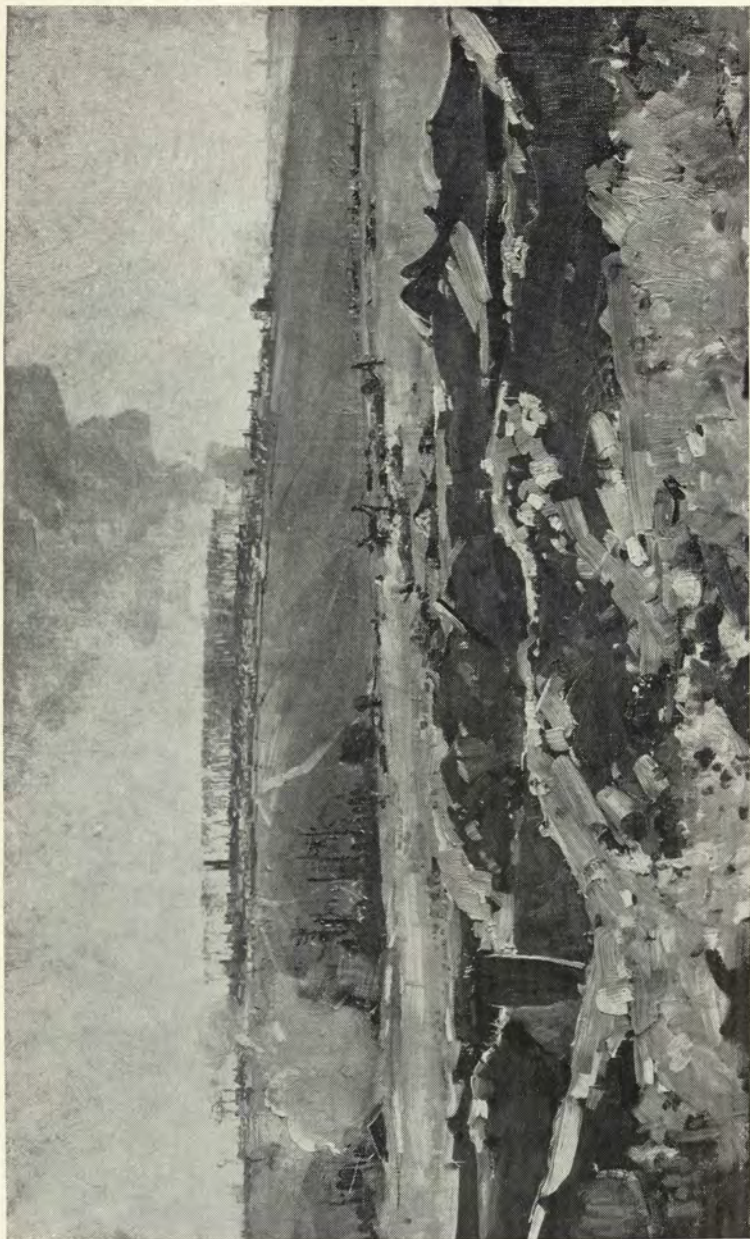


Plate 15. SIR ARTHUR STREETON: Villers Bretonneux. Oil  
From the original in the National Art Gallery of N.S.W., by permission of the Trustees



Plate 16. SIR ARTHUR STREETON: Land of the Golden Fleece. Oil, in the possession of the Australian Club, Sydney

LETTER FROM MARSHALL HALL

this time. None is dated (of course!), but all are addressed to Roberts in Sydney, and one is postmarked 13 July, 1892. Reading them was not made easier by the Professor's habit of dropping in a French or German phrase or a few bars of music.

Hall composed not only music, but verse. In 1898 he created a lively scandal by publishing a collection of his poetic efforts, many of them in the voluptuous Swinburne vein, others humorous at the expense of certain Biblical characters, under the disturbing title "Hymns Ancient and Modern." This was judged unbecoming conduct on the part of a University professor, who had (to quote a contemporary publication) "the directorship of classes largely composed of girls." It ended in the severance of his connection with the University in 1900 and the formation of the Albert Street Conservatorium.

In what is apparently the first of these letters he mentions that he is full of a fine subject for a drama to be called "Bruno," and that he has just finished a "Bassoon Sonata Movement" and scored a symphony, "so I am not altogether idle."

In the next (the one postmarked) the reference to a T.R. picture which "is full of heat and motion and choking dust" must be to *The Breakaway*, bought by the Adelaide Gallery in 1899. The Streeton *Mine* may be the *Fire's On!*, painted at Glenbrook, in the Blue Mountains of N.S.W. in 1891. Streeton did a head of Marshall Hall and the Dr. Fisher portrait in 1889. It is a curious criticism that Bernard Hall "lacks power"; that judgment must surely have been modified on fuller acquaintance. Montgomery would be W. Montgomery, noted for his artistic stained glass. He was a Councillor of the Victorian Artists' Society for some time.

"My Dear Roberts,

Your picture looks finely, and has a first rate position. It is full of heat and motion and choking dust! The *Argus* gave it a good notice. Ha! Ha! How kind and sweet! The great Smith! Smithier of reputations, only he Smithies them all away! Poor devils, they would commit suicide if their occupation was taken from them. Streeton has done *splendidly*. His *Mine* is a wonder of colour and force; and withal so restrained and balanced—such a poetical conception of this last hole in the world! And the damned souls flitting in this purgatory *don't*



*like it!* It makes one gnash one's teeth! He has done a most powerful head of myself; very much the reverse of flattering, but big, big! BIG! Also a most masculine portrait of Dr. Fisher. His dogs, too, though I fear he must plead guilty to the out-of-drawing which was the only thing the critics mentioned, are really *fine*, such *life*, vitality, air, atmosphere (what the deuce is the proper word?). The other pictures in the Gallery look quite *painted* after them. He is doing another fine thing of a girl. His Paris notices are splendid, too; they have just come, and I am translating them for the *Argus*. He misses you very much, I think.

I hear you are working away. I hope to come over and see your work soon. But cash! cash! So much to be done with it! I am pegging away at my drama, which is getting on now. B. Hall seems a nice fellow, certainly very sympathetic, but, I imagine, lacks *power*. He, Montgomery, Streecon, and one or two others were down here last night; wish you had been here, too! Have you read Zola's 'Oeuvre,' 'Masterpiece'? *Grand*, so true! One's own life! Auf Wiedersehn!

G. W. L. M. HALL."

Fox, referred to in the next, was E. Phillips Fox, known to-day by his large, sun-dappled canvases, and by portraits, in most of the important Galleries of Australia. Born in Melbourne, he had just returned to his birthplace (1892) from study in Paris.

"My Dear R.,

Just got your letter. Depend on it you have got a big idea and that is why you are dissatisfied with your work. You will fail a dozen times, but the *thirteenth* you will surpass yourself. Curiously enough, I am going through the same thing myself, but know from experience how it will end; can't help worrying, all the same. Out of a vast nebulous mass worlds gradually take form. Creation never will hurry itself. Patience! Go on trying. Just when you have given it up altogether it will come! Perhaps a year hence! I always find that the true 'creativeness' in one is that feeling of a *lack* in one's work, which agonizes one so much that one is forced to work and work till it is filled—*then* one has accomplished something! I was very

despondent, but a delightful four days at Braemar House, Macedon, with fine walks (in the rain!) and jovial artistic company; playing whist and much chaff and joking till 2 and 3 a.m. every night, has pulled me wonderfully together. I found also a cheery letter from my wife, who is enjoying her voyage thoroughly. What have I been doing? Just what you have! I have a *grand* charcoal outline which I know contains something deep and solemn—like our night at Coogee—but which I can neither fill up, continue, nor complete in any way, try how I will. Damn it! I have chucked it up. It must evolve without my aid and force itself upon me. I have sworn not to *try* at it any more.

Have just seen Fox's studio and work—nice fellow; very interested in you and Streeton; seems to think a mighty lot of you both. His work makes the impression on me of being technically very clever. I find it difficult to *feel* much with it—save a head of a woman done very quietly in shadow, which loses itself in the darkness of the background; the face is very characteristic and the treatment unostentatious, and it seems to me pervaded by a great simplicity and unity.

Remember me to Pring, and to old S., who, I suppose, never dreams of giving you my messages! What a failure all one's work is—it only results in—getting to work! Life is short—Art long—to work!

Thine ever,  
G. W. L. M. HALL."

Let us hark back to Streeton. His next contribution is dated 18th December, 1896. It is from "88 Elizabeth St. (next Falks)." He was having a one-man show, and doing well. A passage recalls the now-forgotten fact that a charge was always made for admission to art exhibitions in those days, both in Melbourne and in Sydney. The "big" picture was the *Purple Noon's Transparent Might*. People mentioned include Dr. Springthorpe and Dr. Felix Meyer, both noted for their liberal patronage of art in Melbourne, and Carl Pinschof, Consul for Austria-Hungary, whose hospitable home was always open to representatives of the world of culture. The poem about to come out was Marshall Hall's "Hymn to Sydney."

A comical situation is suggested when Mather, a Trustee of

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

the Melbourne Gallery, offers £150 for the *Purple Noon's Transparent Might*, and Langton, another Trustee, offers £126, both on behalf of the Gallery. Individual Trustees appear to have had a pretty free hand in those days!

"18 Dec., '96.

Dear Bulldog,

Many thanks. Your kind note came yesterday. Yes! I've had quite a boom here. I told Hall that I had to thank him a lot in booming the thing, but, as he says, no one could boom a collection of bad pictures in Melb. just now.

Had 3 days' view—1, 2, 3rd of Dec. and have taken good money (1/-) at the door ever since. Springthorpe, Lynch and Pinschof and Dr. Meyer have bought, and a squatter, Mr. Riches.

Mather offered me, as a result of the Trust meeting, £150 for the big one; next day Langton (not knowing Mather's action) came and offered me 120 guineas. I told him that I considered their 1st offer through Mather as being quite a serious one and refused, and a day or two later the said little 'dingbat' left a note accepting it for £150. Ha! Ha!

Allan's lent piano; girls came every day and made tea. The attendant costs 15/- a week.

P.S. The Prof. has another poem coming out, connected with the joyousness, etc., of Sydney—"City of laughing loveliness, sun-girdled queen," etc.

Monday Morning.

Hall, Delmer and I walked over to the Prof. McCubbin's yesterday and had tea with him in his garden. Mrs. Prof. in a harmonious yellow gown; all the little Profs. buzzing round the garden of fruit trees and the haystack. The Prof. is a married man, very happily and securely married.

A year or two and I may be lying on a lovely balcony or housetop gazing with half-closed eyes at my blue Mediterranean, 1 or 2 bright little Neapolitans drinking about and within the portal the passion of a fine soprano, or, maybe, her swift anger blackguarding me like the devil.

Hall and Delmer and I had a hearty laugh at the 'Dingbats' at the *Conversazione* at Natl. Gallery the other evening."

## STRONG URGE TO PAINT

The next appears to be slightly out in the chronological order, but it is obviously of the period and the same mood of unrest. Russell was the Sydney-born artist, John Russell, who shared a walking tour through Spain with Dr. William Maloney and Tom Roberts in the early eighties. Russell married Mariana Antoinetta Matiocco, whose intellectual and beautiful face appears in the Rodin *Minerve Sans Casque*, that striking marble in the Melbourne Gallery, and appears again under the helmet of Fremiet's *Joan of Arc*, who exults on the lawn in front of that building. . . . Kipling had just made his sensational appearance in the literary firmament and his work was doing much to keep Smike from brooding too deeply over his frustrations.

(Apparently from Richmond, Vic., before 1897.)

"Dear Bulldog,

Many thanks for Russell's letter. 'Tis very interesting. He seems to love the open air very much, and, therefore, must be a fine chap. (Have only glanced quickly through the letter at present.) But he does seem to me to bother too much about the ways and means—really there's not time enough to do that. I should think 'twould take a man off his inspiration or idea. For me, my work may perish, but must risk that, so as to go on. Really, old man, life is such a small time. A man wants all the bother of drawing, and drying and blending, and so on, all just in his hand, and forget all about them and put forth his mind and out with all he has till he's exhausted, then rest and sleep and on again and on.

About my going away. I want to produce more work. I see Miss Achurch a good deal, and her acting is very splendid and great. I say to myself, I must work more and produce bigger, more serious things. I consider my position and find I'm boxed up minding house (while the people are in Sydney), painting little things. I want to be painting every day and have the serious matter of art in front of me, and not be mucking the time away. It's a sin. I don't, perhaps, express myself clearly—but somehow *I want to be at it.*

I picture in my head the Murray and all the wonder and glory at its source up toward Kosciusko (Meyer wrote a lovely description of it), and the great gold plains, and all the beautiful inland Australia, and I love the thought of walking into all this

and trying to expand and express it in my way. I fancy large canvases all glowing and moving in the happy light and others bright decorative and chalky and expressive of the hot trying winds and the slow immense summer. It is IMMENSE, and drought and cracks in the earth and creeks all baked mud.

But somehow it's all out of reach, and all sorts of dam'd little things in the way. Two-thirds of the year I have a feeling of dependence on other people, indebtedness, &c. It carries you off your work and holds thought that should play in a good current on to many canvases and be strong. The current gets weakened.

I love Australia (and yet have seen so little) and shall be beastly sorry to go away (when I do go away—Lord knows when or how).

But I can't sit here thinking, 'tis waste of time. I want to hurry up and MOVE somehow. So first opportunity and I'm off. Since you've been away (weeks) I seem to have only painted one thing, and that I did in a few days, my portrait in your studio. Technically I think it's a good way better than any figure work I've done (done so little).

Of course, my troubles are, no doubt, small—we hear of good artists who starve all their lives, and so on. I don't grumble a bit, but it's unfortunate. This country is full of wealth, but somehow can't afford artists yet. Why, dammit, bricklayers, scene shifters, office boys, all get their work recognized and are able to go on—and if I were recognized more I could PAINT MORE. Perhaps I'd have the same trouble in Europe, but I must risk it . . . O, blast it! I'm getting tired. Let's talk of something else. Prof. came to your studio yesterday and had a yarn and look at my portrait. (I suppose the portrait conceit will be knocked out of me when you come down.) Then out to Auburn to tea, yarn, &c. His picture looks healthy and like the Prof.

I wrote to Paris this morning quite cheerfully. By the way, which of Rudyard Kipling's have you read lately? Charrington lent me one, 'The Light That Failed.' It's wonderfully fine and true and impressed me much. I read also a short tale with good illustrations, 'Badalia Herodsfoot.'

I'm glad you're enjoying yourself and are well—after all, what the hell's the good of the whole earth without health.

## STREETON IN LONDON

I've been smoking rather heavily to-day and I must stop.

By the way, isn't it very strong and true where Dick Helder kisses Maisie on the steamer at night, and, oh, the poor chap going blind. But how splendid how he gets back his sketches from the old proprietor of the illustrated newspaper. The 'Light That Failed' is the best by far—immense.

Yours truly,

SMIKE."

As Streeton had not long arrived in London, the Royal Academy exhibition which he mentions in this letter of June 28, 1898, was probably his first. He was obviously not enamoured of the show, considering it to be more commercial than artistic. But it was a stimulus; he felt he could do as well as most of the exhibitors, and he looked forward to creating a few outstanding things (which he did) when he returned to Australia. The letter was addressed to Vickery's Buildings, Pitt Street, Sydney.

"Dear Bulldog,

I went to the Academy yesterday (from where one of mine came back (D) just before varnishing day—it did not hurt my vanity much, for I was quite prepared; still, it would have helped considerably to have been in). Somehow the Academy has an inartistic atmosphere—just like all the other shops in London, with their imposing fronts, etc. Sargent is a perfect wonder (8 portraits), and he has 3 at the New Gallery, and 2 or 3 of his are quite as fine as the great Rembrandt, and their quality will rise a bit with the mellowness of a century. East has 2 landscapes, the 2 best I can remember, and I feel capable of just as good if I can hang on till I get my chance. I've weighed the matter carefully. Abbey has a very, very beautiful picture, *King Lear*; Orchardson a large, grand portrait; Brangwyn's *Golden Horn*, I should say, was a masterpiece, but it's higher than anything in the Academy, so I hardly see more than I can in the illustrated catalogue of it. Greiffenhagen's portrait, full length, reflects the skylights bitterly, and I felt very, very sorry, for it looks a lovely picture. He's as great as any artist in England, I think, bar Watts and the marvellous skill of Sargent. Byam Shaw, I think, is like Anning Bell—much better in black

and white; they're the best I see for line illustration and book plates, etc.

I was only at the R.A. for 2 or 3 hours, but haven't the least desire to go again. Watts' picture looks poor there, dragged down by its rotten surroundings; no doubt 'tis a sickening commercial show, and East not even A.R.A. or Greiffenhagen.

Hardy has one in, Spong two (sold, I believe). Hardy just returned from the country, where he painted a portrait commission—very fortunate. I met Spence in the New Gallery; he'll get on well, I should say, and will have maybe 2 or 3 in the next year's R.A., and maybe be well placed; he could do just the article they seem to require.

Spong got his back up when I said that the 'International' Exhn. in Knightsbridge was finer as an art exhibition than the Academy; put it down to my not getting in. At 'International' are Bell, Rodin, Loudon, Greiffenhagen, Whistler, Conder, Rothenstein (who, I think, is good at lithographs, not painting), and the Scotch School—best in England (Bell thinks)—Lavery, Furze, Patterson and others. Also Degas and all the best foreigners—Beardsley, Raven Hill, Charles Keene, etc. A great show, but poorly attended.

The R.A. is a fine 'block' in boulevard, serves same purpose, etc.

The English is not an artistic race; it is still too healthy and warlike, and when it becomes artistic it will be enervated and topple over, as is the case with all great empires. Fortunately for England, it is still growing and enlarging, and the great apex is far distant.

There's to be a Soiree next month at the Grafton, and don't please be angry at my not saying more information of the show; it's been a success.

Somehow all the shopkeeping idea at the R.A. yesterday takes all artistic interest out of me to-day, and though London shows one the Old Masters and Watts, on the other hand it does subtract from one a bit. London is a bit trying at times.

Please don't address me here at Chelsea, but care of Barnett. I don't think I will be here very long, but I can always call on Barnett for any letters.

My sister is at Ipswich, and I saw her and husband for a few hours when they were up the other day.

SUNDAY MORNING IN CHELSEA

Sydney is a beautiful memory—and the weather seemed always fine there.

I feel convinced that my work hereafter will contain a larger idea and quality than before, after seeing Constable, Turner, Titian, Watts, and all the masters. I wish you and the Prof. could have a trip here; I think it's necessary for one's work. I'm evolving, and should I return I'd never paint Australia in exactly the same way. By Gad, I'll do one or two great things if I get out there again. I know more now and would touch it more poetically.

Kind regards to Mrs. Bulldog.

Yours truly,

ARTHUR STREETON  
(otherwise SMIKE)."

Writing from the Cafe Gatti, Villiers St., off Strand, he refers gratefully to a useful fiver just to hand from his brother Jack and rejoices that he can now return to his unfinished work in Sussex. He had been ill with a cold and had had a bad attack of the blues. Then "Later, 13 Nov., 1898," from 4 Joubert Mansions, King's Rd., Chelsea, he adds:

"It is Sunday morning, with the noise of the church bells instead of 2 other noises that are disagreeable, *viz.*, the sweep and the coal man. Before me my economical little fire, with its cheerful glow, my feet stretched to the mantel, where are 'Jane Eyre,' 'Chatterton,' 'Sonnets,' and 'Wuthering Heights,' by Bronte—a wonderful book—a purple-colored hyacinth glass, the old flynet I used to use at Heidelberg, the fine photograph of Mrs. Dodds, my 'Mention Honorable,' and a little nude in red chalk—best I've ever done. My place is about 14 x 14, ceiling 5 feet above me, and a lovely 'poppied' cretonne screens off my resting place, and a little hell-hole for coals, and a little lavatory also, and *very little* light, but I have a fine incandescent lamp, which makes the place quite bright and cheerful. A good portrait of Miss Spong (now in America) unfinished—dashed in in one day; also rather large picture, *Ariadne*; also red chalk study for a *Venus and Adonis*. Portraits of Alf Conroy and Marshall Hall make me think of National Park picnic and Alfred's excuses and the slippery block of ice he was supposed



to look after. An amorous burden, the sly dog. Jim's friend, Mr. Horace Friend, came to see me here in the vault (as Spong calls it). Well, he seems a very nice fellow; was got up in rare style and looked ruddy and in splendid form, and I felt almost ashamed of looking pale and seedy. He rides in Hyde Park of a morning; lives in Duke St., St. James', close to Boucicault; has invitations to St. Petersburg, Scotland, &c. He's having a rare time of it, I should say. I was almost sorry Norman was with us; he glared about and stammered in his argumentative way, and I didn't get half a yarn with Friend.

Just at the finish of the preceding page a knock came at my door and Barnett dropt in to see me; he'll be back in an hour or two to take me out for a walk. He hadn't seen the portrait of Mrs. Dodds; asked who the lady was, and admired it very much—"very refined, beautiful head," etc. By the way, tell or persuade Mrs. Dodds to order a few dozen more to be printed of that picture, and put them by. It's a rare one, and she'll never have a better. I haven't written her for a long time, and somehow prefer to wait till I have my best mood or best thoughts to write her; her intelligence is of the most refined order, similar to that of your wife; they should get along well together, I imagine.

I haven't touched canvas with a brush for about 6 weeks (the autumn). Have been trying a little designing in red chalk, but also have been trying to write a few scenes for a book. A young English painter goes to Australia, and gradually the influence of Sydney life unfolds his inner life (one of natural warmth), falls in love with the musical wife of a doctor, and yet is already engaged to an English girl, etc. One scene is laid at Mrs. Patterson's house, 'Bookhams,' in Surrey. But Lud—there may be nothing in it after all; but it puts in time. Don't forget to read 'Wuthering Heights,' by Bronte; it's splendid.

Friend invited me to look him up at his club, 'Junior Athenaeum.' I wonder how you put in your Sundays when you lived in London. You'd be surprised how little sexless Norman Hardy fits into London. I can't imagine him at camp, or on the 'Mildura.' He attracts a certain amount of attention by the cautious way he moves along, with his senses all alert, as though he might be attacked any moment.

23 Nov., '98.

Just closing this to catch the mail. By the way, I saw Greiffenhagen about 6 months after I landed (at his studio). I'll go and see him again. He and Watts are the most interesting artists to me in England.

Dined with Friend at Junior Athenaeum; very, very swell, everybody dressed. Long yarn with him; very nice chap, indeed; lucky devil, too, seems quite well off. I like him.

Love to Mrs. T.R. and you and the baby.

Jolly glad to get Jim's letter with £14 enclosed; he's a brick in every way. I paid £10 away to landlord to-day. Remember me to Reidy and Alf and the boys. I write Jim by this mail. Mrs. Patterson is well and runs a good millinery and hat concern just off Hanover Square; she has a wonderful hat fair coming on.

Ever yours,

SMIKE."

(Maurice Greiffenhagen, later to be R.A., had established a London reputation as painter and magazine-illustrator; G. F. Watts, R.A., was both painter and sculptor.)

In June of the following year (1899) came a letter from Streton, still at 4 Joubert Mansions, to Roberts, whose address is Vickery Buildings, 76 Pitt Street, Sydney. He opens by referring to certain pictures he is sending out to Australia (the list, with its prices, is appended), but the burden of the letter is concerned with his delight in the friendship he has formed with a talented Canadian violinist, Miss Nora Clench. (They married in 1908.)

"4 Joubert Mansions,  
Chelsea, London, S.W.,  
22 June.

My Dear Bulldog,

Thanks for your last. I'm not sure when it came now. I've been so lightheaded (as it were) lately.

I have sent a list of pictures to Jim, and I enclose a duplicate for you in case he may be away. I don't know what they'll look like out there. If you feel that there are any that ought not to be shown, I wish you'd keep it back, and, believe me, I'd take it as a kindness. You see, I can't send my best from here yet; only one or two first trials and one called *Australian Recollections*,

painted here during the vile winter to cheer me a bit. However, being entirely painted from memory and imagination (not even a pencil line), it may look rather weak out there; I can't say. However, I'd like to put this in your hands and abide by it, if 'tis not too much. I send one 5 feet (sent to 'K.' here long ago) never shown here, or in Australia. I've worked on it a trifle here, but it's not a picture (has some good local bits) but no unity—*no picture*. Therefore, I'm not proud of it. If it ought not to go in, keep it back; give it away or stick to it. I think it's a failure somehow. I wrote Jim that I'd like him and you to look at my things when framed, and if necessary alter my prices, if you think it would be any advantage. I'd be so glad. People maybe will judge me on these few things I send—I don't care. I'm in an uncertain evolving state and do not care for them at all; but later on I trust to do some good pictures.

I went with my dear violinist friend to a lovely old church, St. Bartholomew's, in Cheapside, A.D.1123. Think of it, such a dignified old place—wonderful. Architecturally it struck us as being far finer than St. Paul's, where we went same day and viewed the city and river from the high terrace. Same day, also, to the Guildhall, exbn. of Turner (pictures you've never seen, I should think). As a collection as fine as the Nat. Gallery collection, I think. He is wonderful master—as a landscape painter embraces, I should say, more qualities than any other. Oh! the variety—the *variety*; tremendous range and the wonderful tones and the color. Oh, the truth, the beauty. As great as Rembrandt or any, I think—he's simply gorgeous. The transition of color and value; the castle and cloud and the imagination. I think it will help me immensely.

So, too, will this friend of mine. She's well read in all poetry; can draw in the most original way; intimate with Watts; is going to work at a concert she's going to give at St. James' Hall in the autumn with orchestra behind. She's wise (advises me, as you often used to, to spur me with energy and better things), and, damme, she has the loveliest eyes possible and the most delightful rosy flush thro' her fresh cheeks. Ah! I get absolutely drowsy and faint with her sweet attraction when she is near. Fortnight ago she showed me all Westminster Abbey (I'd never been in before). What a great poetic place—and how the girl seemed to fit into it all; and full many a hurrying tourist turned

to look at her again. Her cheeks and eyes were so attractive and bright with enthusiasm. It's like finding another myself. Last Saturday I spent the day with her in Richmond Park; we sat under dozens of different very old oaks, and all thro' the twilight till 10 o'clock we walked near the river under the terrace of Richmond Hill. No day in my life, I think, has been so happy.

She's much braver and finer in every way than I, and would have been a fit companion for Keats, I feel sure. It's amusing, as I write, a letter comes in which she encloses a postal order for 3/11—her share of last day's expenses. She will insist on paying her whack.

Conder is in London—been here about 14 days, I believe (Rothenstein said so). He has a most delightful show of paintings on silk, mostly fans. Selling well, too. I wrote him my congratulations, but got no response. He's on the toot, I imagine. I tried to break him of it when first I came—useless. I could never live thro' it. For me he's not healthy, tho' I like him very much as of old, and his work. He's a fine artist.

Very many thanks. *So very glad* to get the Derby. *It was so nice of you*, and I smoked your health and enjoyed it. And Tudor Saint George looked better for his voyage. He doesn't look well now (has one lung a *little* affected, between us). Doctor told him. However, 'tis warm weather now, fortunately. Poor chap. He lives next door to Norman over in Battersea, and Spong asks me, 'How are the Normans and the Tudors and Plantagenets, etc.'

My sweetheart is a Canadian—and she speaks of the strange feeling of having known me for years. I feel it on my side, too.

From

SMIKE."

## SMIKE TO BULLDOG

## List of Pictures

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<i>(When the sky-line's blue burnished resistance          Makes deeper the dreamiest distance,          Some song in all hearts bath existence          Such songs have been mine.</i>	
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4. <i>Love Lane</i> .. .. .	15
5. <i>Sussex Harvest</i> .. .. .	15
6. <i>The Ezbekiyah Garden, Cairo</i> .. .. .	10
7. <i>Hill and Cloud</i> .. .. .	10

Smike, 34 years of age, is finding it hard to make both ends meet while in London. With an income for the previous eleven months of only £40, cash in hand at the moment just three shillings, his work turned down by the Academy and other shows, it says much for his courage that he could still be hopeful. It is understandable that his thoughts turned with longing to the earlier care-free days and his old companions at Heidelberg. A clever pen-and-ink sketch, drawn in the letter, shows how keen was his recollection of the eastern view from Eglemont.

"2, The Mall,  
 Church Road,  
 Park Hill Road,  
 Hampstead, N.W.

1 October, 1901.

My Dear Bulldog,

Your last 'to hand' long since, and my days have been rather dull and interspersed with miscellaneous blues. Fact is, last year I was lucky, and consequently did some of my best work; the past 11 months I've sold less than £40 (my exes. are rent £45, taxes about £20, caretaker, 5/- week, food, clothes, materials and cat's meat added on). Just managing to hang on, again and again. However, Thomson, the principal of Agnew & Sons, bought two little ones *cheap—for himself*. The greatest compliment save my 'Mention' years ago.

## HARD STRUGGLE

I tried the R.A., New English, and International—with usual result. I don't mind being hard up for years to come, save for the cursed waste of opportunity. These are my most precious years, and all last winter, spring and summer I was confined here—no coin for models. Just doing my best and hoping for the future, and eating my heart out to think of the sweet passing summer and the hills in the country.

However, there's usually an end to most things.

I'm going to let my studio here *if possible* and work in Paris next winter. I was over there for a week a little time back. The first impression never to be forgotten. Best of all, the Louvre, the Giorgione, Titians, Poussins, Claudes, Tintoretos. My Golly, how they sank down into me. How inspiring. I was just as fresh for those old chaps as when I walked around the dear gold hills of Heidelberg and dreaming over the Dandenongs and all the Great Beyond.

I have a fine one here nearly finished (and highly so, too), *Venus and Adonis* (30 x 20). Delmer says best I've done. It may be like the Old Masters, but yet in design and everything it's entirely my own and original.

Delmer was here for a week lately, and was married to his girl from Victoria (at St. George's, Hanover Square), and now off to Berlin, where he is lecturer in English at the highest University; moved up from Konigsberg.

I write with 3/- in hand, and plenty of pressing accounts, and feel fairly cheerful. I'm going to see Tadema next Monday; he seems very kind.

Bulldog, me Bho, I'm 34, and you 46, I think. When you come you'll find me in main matters just the same as ever I was. Write me what time you're really likely to come this way. My love to the Prof. and Don, and Mrs. Bulldog, and any boys who used to like me. How I'd love to dine with you three chaps and Hall in Melbourne to-night. Buck in, there are grand pictures for you to see in London again.

Yours ever,

SMIKE."

Gaps in this correspondence may be filled by reference to letters printed in the "Tom Roberts' Life," already referred to. The next available here found Roberts (and Mrs. Roberts) at

East Putney. Smike was now in 4 Rossetti Studios, Chelsea, having changed so that he might get "three regular meals cooked every day." The date was May, 1903. He mentions that he and Conder had recently been a good deal together. A year later he heads his paper "The Hayes, Kenley, Surrey," but he is just on the point of returning to Chelsea.

"All around the fragrance of roses and new-mown hay, and splendid clouds.

Burchett tells me that he did not leave my 50 x 40 of Windsor at your place. I've instructed him to do so. I'd like to have a look at it there and varnish it and get Mr. Russell Rea to come and see it.

The price of the Blue and Gold at your place with frame £30; and if that's too high I'll take £21 (20 guineas)."

The eight-page epistle which follows may really have antedated by a few months the previous letter. Conder, to die within such a few years afterwards, had married, and Streeton envied him his felicity. The group could not have been very prosperous just then. Streeton's remark about free meals is significant.

"20 Oakley,  
Sunday Night.

Dear Bulldog,

I was unlucky on Saturday evening—both Remus and you out. I rode to Barnes Common and tried again after, and same to-day at noon, so presumed you were all away for the day. I felt quite "biffed," for I'd ridden down for a meal. I suppose that in the Golden Age Chelsea gave meals on tick. But they don't now.

Barnes Common was most beautiful to-day. It's as good as anywhere to study skies. It was like a grand sonnet to-day. They sailed across the pale blue, like a fleet of vast voluptuous formed fleeces, and far behind them the band of thin horizontal stratum, or whatever it's called, like the lightest gossamer with no edges, and stretched tight, as tho' some genii of the air were having tug-of-war with a cloud ribbon.

The thousand spreading May trees, and all the pink, white

## CONDER AND HIS WIFE

and cream lovers sitting and reclining. Aspens shimmering their myriad leaves and brilliant bright lights at the sun. The sober gorse, and blue silk drapery, like a butterfly against it; and the cloud shadow like a great mantle of purple pansy thrown over yon distant clump of house and trees.

It all looked most jolly, and I felt rather like a detached, empty cottage, so I returned here and resumed the watercolor I'd started out of my head in the morning and stuck to it till 8 o'clock. Our paints do come in handy.

If you're going in to Warwick Square to-morrow I'd be glad if you could drop in on the way, and lend me that 10/- or 5 bob again. I'd ride down again to-night, but I'm tired.

Mr. Baillie can't get paid by his buyers. I've been at him a good deal of late and can sympathize with him and appreciate the sentiments and feelings of the 'dun.'

You ought to drop in one afternoon and see K. and his wife at the new house, corner Beaufort St. and Cheyne Walk. It's a lovely place, and they are both most happy in it, and, of course, in each other. It's splendid the way he pegs away at his silks; fastidious and exacting with his gifts, and yet patient as an Asiatic artist. And Mrs. K., the charming Chief Secretary of State, Commander of Correspondence Department, of Foreign and Domestic Affairs, and General Enquirer and Clerk of Works. She granted me a permit to sit in a lead gutter on her roof and sketch the Thames. It was close quarters, and precisely like sitting in the ancient 'stocks,' only not being locked in. I thought at the time how different a seat under a hawthorn in bloom and one's arm round the tree trunk, or anything else that was handy.

Yours,

SMIKE."

From Ferreri's Family Hotel, Southampton, he complained of the coal dust that floated continually in the air and fouled his work (that was in June, 1905), and in August he despatched a long letter from the Hotel St. George, Liverpool, a letter almost entirely an account of the life and death of the Emperor Julian. He had been reading Gibbon and was filling in a sleepless night.

Back in Melbourne in 1906, he gives his address as C/o H. H.



Streeton, Camberwell. His Bulldog was at 44 Kenilworth Road, Putney. Streeton had had a great home-coming, after a rather nasty accident at Adelaide. This letter had his first reference to Lambert, who had gone to London as holder of the N.S.W. Society of Artists' Travelling Scholarship in 1900. . . . The Herbert mentioned was Streeton's brother. . . .

Frank Tate, who took part in the welcome, was the first Director of Education in Victoria. Baldwin Spencer, joining at the time oversight of the National Museum with his professional duties, could not have been kinder.

"I had an excellent time of it coming out. I had the captain's cabin and he slept in his chart room and gave me many privileges, walking the bridge, etc., best cigars *ad lib*, etc., and David Waite motored me out to Glen Osmond, and I lunched with the family, and was most kind to his prodigal. His son drove me about Adelaide in a swell dog-cart, and for the first time had an accident, and 3 of us (not the old gentleman) shot out of the cart—I under the horse's legs. However, I waited till she had finished and crawled from under her, bruised in 6 or 7 places but nothing broken.

I came off to Williamstown and the Capt. was going to turn in (after 2 long nights of work) at 6.30, so I was the only passenger let off. He gave me the agent's skiff (sprit sail and 2 men), and there was a sea, but I was dropt in, and put on oilskins, and we sailed like hell for cover at Williamstown, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles; thence straight to Herbert's place, and then found that he and Prof. and Mather and Withers, and lots of others, were at the wharf. However, I've seen 'em all now, and it's delightful. The Prof. as buzzy and cheerful as ever. Spencer telephoned to me soon as I arrived to take my bag to Armadale and stay with him, and it's lovely. He and Fink and Dr. Meyer out, also Tate, head of the Education Dept., and we had a great supper. Yesterday Fink drove us in his motor (Spencer and me) all thro' Heidelberg, Eltham and Diamond Creek, and the car ran up steep country roads to Withers' place and did all but climb the trees. The trees are as lovely as ever. Oh, the smell of it and the blue hills around—wonderful.

To-morrow I go to dear old Prof. Laurie and some friends at his place for dinner. The Don's brothers lunched me in the

Winter Garden, with the Prof. and Withers and Aytoun (*Age*), and he asked about the Clausen selection, and I reply I don't want to look at 'em. I've seen thousands of pictures and I want to rest and paint. The Prof. has most kindly placed *one* of his studios at my disposal in the Gallery, and my boxes are there now to be opened. I interviewed Mullaly & Byrne and got 'em through quite free. Spencer gives me a room in the Museum to write letters in.

One of the first I enquired for was C. S. Paterson, and he's away. I'm delighted to state that he's on his legs, and doing finely. I heard from his son. I miss Hall very much and hope the operation on his eyes is successful.

Herbert is as good as ever, and Melb. looks lovely, and the women look delightful and smartly dressed. So far the charm and generosity of the men have taken all my time.

Give my love to Remus and your wife—and dear old Lambert—and I wish you all the best of things for the coming exhibition. Write me all about Chelsea and London and tell Remus I'll write him next and give him any news in this letter, so he won't think me unkind. I'm off to town in 5 minutes, and it's a rush.

Yours,

SMIKE."

"P.S. No one has heard of Spong. I have a charming letter of welcome from Sydney artists."

Still in Camberwell, Victoria, he writes again in December, having just had Bulldog's letter of 8th November. He was still being feted in his native State. The Clausen purchase to which he refers was the group of European paintings bought for the National Gallery by Mr. George Clausen, R.A., as agent for the Felton Bequest. As was customary (and still is usual!), the critics differed about the merits of the pictures. Streeton showed a wise discretion in refusing to be drawn into the controversy.

"Misses Good and Vale" possibly stands for Madame Elmhurst Goode (painter and singer) and Miss May Vale (miniaturist). Which is meant of the seven "Chepstows" he painted about 1900 is not clear. The "fine fellow" of the postscript would be Louis McCubbin, now Director of the South Australian National Gallery.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

"C/o H. H. Streeton,  
Camberwell,  
Melb.  
19 Dec., 1906.

Dear Bulldog,

Yours of 8 Nov. to hand. Very glad to learn all the news about the British Colonial Exhibition. (Many thanks for the reminder.) But I'm not keen on it (especially if Lake touches it—between ourselves).

I'm glad Misses Good and Vale are comfortable. There's one small amount I hadn't time to settle—'Gas.' I'll send a small draft to 'Little Willie,' and will square it up, with 2 or 3 amounts of a few pounds.

I've just been advised by Bourlet, of Nassau St. W., that Walter Barnett's picture was delivered from the Limerick Exhbn., and also the companion picture, *Chepstow*, is on its way here in a case; it will be most handy.

I'm glad Parker is doing better; give him my best wishes and I'm writing to Remus about his monotypes.

It's very pleasant here. Spencer telephoned to me here one hour after I got to Herbert's place, and he asked me to go next day to his place, and I've just returned after a fine time. He leaves to-day for Tasmania and N.Z. for 6 weeks. He's most kind and seems quite a power here, and helps me in many ways. There are ructions at our Club in Church St. Damme, there's antipathy here between Hall and the artists, and very little satisfaction at Clausen's purchase. However, I'll write how they look later on (to you). I'm continually asked for my views, but I get on well with everybody here, quite easily, and will not join any of their rows, and for the present shall be bothered about no pictures but my own. I'm going to try and do some business here for once, and there seems a fine chance. There seems quite a demand for me here, and Spencer waited impatiently till the cases were opened and dived in and out among the dust, like a feverish prospector for nuggets. I gave him one he liked right off for his kindness and his welcome, and he bought 7 others. I didn't let him know I was cleaned out, of course, and it comes in most handy and allows me to run up to Sydney to see my parents next Friday with Herbert (who is as good as ever).

STREETON IS FETED

I think I wrote of Spencer's dinner, Meyer, Fink and Tate, then Mather, then John Ford and Withers—most pleasant dinners they were. Last Saturday Felix Meyer and his charming wife gave me a picnic up the river. We got boats at Burnley and pulled up a mile or two; a lovely day and a great spread of white cloths, and strawberries and ice and tea, etc. A real gathering of wise men.

Prof. and Mrs. Berry.

do. Skeats.

Mr. Russell.

Dr. and Mrs. Osborne.

Dr. Springthorpe and daughter.

Mrs. Pirani and daughter.

Several other professors and doctors, and most charming women, too. About 30 in 6 boats and 2 canoes.

Next day, Monday, Spencer took me to Mentone, and after lunch we went all over the old spots, and I felt sad at missing the row of large banksias (honeysuckle) you painted with figures. Monday evening a quiet jamborree (on my own).

Thursday night a Smoke Night for me at Eastern Hill, and I'm lying low for it, and the next day by express to Redfern. Had a pleasant note from the *Bulletin*, and Souter, representing the artists, who are waiting to fete me there.

Love to wife and all the boys. Write soon again and of Chelsea. Best wishes.

SMIKE.

P.S.—The Prof. is the dearest old chap in the world, and his boy is a fine fellow. Mrs. Prof. good as ever; she's a kind soul. I'm going to-morrow to see Johnny's works; he's a good sort. Lorry Abrahams is extremely kind—like everybody else.

I gave Frank Stuart a letter to Derwent Wood, and hope he'll meet Lambert and the boys. I'm wondering if he has your address. However, be sure to see him.

SMIKE."

A trip to his parents and to Sydney followed. Again was the fatted calf killed and the prodigal made welcome. On Christmas Day, 1906, he told the faithful Bulldog all about it. The group which met him at Redfern were nearly all artists. William McLeod was managing director of the *Bulletin* at the time, and

## SMIKE TO BULLDOG

he had been one of the earliest to draw for that journal; Arthur Collingridge was artist, engraver and author of several books; D. H. Souter had not then invented his famous cat, but he was well established as a cartoonist; which of the several of that name was "Young" Ashton I do not know, possibly it was Howard, son of Julian; Lionel Lindsay is, of course, the present Sir Lionel. A popular actor and producer in Bland Holt is also named.

"Hornsby, N.S.W.,  
25 Dec., 1906.

Dear Bulldog,

A few lines on Christmas night. I left Melbourne last Friday by express with Herbert. The night before there was a soiree and smoke-night at Eastern Hill, Mather in chair. It was a pleasant welcome, and so strange to rise up and respond to the toast, and a move round and chat, and the time flew, and we went home rather merry.

And here I am with the old folks, both hearty and well, the old gentleman fighting his battles again and my mother dearer than ever. This is a red tiled bungalow on the edge of a glen or gully and quite wild and beautiful. I did 2 gems to-day of the sunlight on rocks and gum, and on a lovely honeysuckle heavy with old grey cones and a few fresh ones; the color and general fascination is wonderful. And my brother made billy tea while I painted. Stanley has grown into a fine fellow, quite well-bred and most fascinating personality, and we 3 brothers climbed about the huge rocks (real bush) and picked up the thread again most pleasantly.

Sand's Gallery is all right for prints, but useless for the color of pictures. Ashton's studio and school room I looked at—much better light and fair space. The place is empty, and has been for 7 years; rent 100 a year.

Herbert and I looked out of the sleeper at Redfern and found McLeod, Souter, Collingridge, Young Ashton, Toodles, Lionel Lindsay and 3 others, and last moment up raced Alfred—fine and strong. He took Toodles and me, too, to Paris House, fine lunch. Jim in country, also House. Thursday night, Paris House at 8 p.m. Supper. Souter is extremely kind; he worked it up. It's delightful to get back and feel the affection is so genuine.

Lindsay we saw yesterday. His work is magnificent; I think

## A WAITING EXHIBITION

the finest work I've seen in Australia so far. Holt I've seen again; he was rehearsing while I was there. Most people are away. We return to Melb. on 31st by Ville de la Ciotat, and then I must work like the devil.

Love to all.

Yours,

SMIKE.

I got to Sydney 3 days ago and have enjoyed rest and quiet here very much. Melbourne rather spoils me for Sydney."

A very pleasant word picture of the Pinschof home at Macedon, where Streeton was holidaying in February, 1907, is painted in his next budget for Roberts. Professor Spencer had evidently been buying liberally, and so had Herr Pinschof.

"Macedon, 6 Feb., 1907.

Dear Bulldog,

It's a rainy morning. Mrs. Pinschof is having her French lesson on the verandah with Mademoiselle. Louisa is buzzing about with her camera, Elizabeth with writing close by, and Carmen leans over the piano doing nothing in particular in the most fascinating way possible. Mr. Pinschoff has gone down to the office, and it's delightful to sit on the verandah and smoke and hear the magpies on the hillside yonder, and read by fits and starts in the Sentimental Journey of Laurence Sterne—his little flirtations are simply lovely.

Carmen and Elizabeth camp out in the garden, the weather permitting. We have all our meals on the big verandah, and the lager here flows crisp amber from the tall bottles. Carmen desires me to let you know that she is following your example with 'Lager de Beerus.' It's very jolly here. Croquet, and tennis, and reading, and walking, and the music also.

Spencer sent me a delightful letter from N.Z., where he's having a 6 weeks' rest. He bought a whole lot of my small ones, enthusiastically helping to unpack them in his shirt sleeves. Pinschoff came to the Gallery 2 days ago 10 minutes before closing time and wrote his name on the back of 5 or 6, and 2 of them are of the best and most costly. He hasn't even asked the price. Others are awaiting my Exhibition and I cannot yet find a room. Smythe (as kind as can be) will try and get 'Glen's' for me.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

Jim Conroy and Dodds were here for 2 or 3 days, and I went down and met them at Scott's for lunch, and we had a fly round for 2 days together.

Soon as the rain clears a bit I'll walk over to the Prof's place, about 5 miles from here. I have a camera and will send a few records of Sydney and Smith and his launch. I took, I think, 30 films of Carmen and her sisters and may have fluked a few good ones.

Herbert and I have been re-papering his house and shop. He's most kind and I value him very much.

I suppose you are all finishing up for the R.A. and New Gallery. Give my best regards to Mrs. T.R. and Remus and Lambert and Norman and the boys.

Yours ever,

SMIKE."

The looked-for show, its difficulties and its final triumph are detailed in the letter which follows. (Moore records that sales amounted to £2000.) It is interesting to note that Thallon, the picture-framer, well known in Melbourne to-day, was "going strong" so long ago. Still more interesting is the description of the Melbourne Athenaeum as a showplace for pictures in comparison with what it is now. The "Hibernian Hall" later became the Guild Hall; many art exhibitions succeeded Streeton's there, including an early one by Blamire Young. The "large" picture sold to Adelaide was the 59 x 36 *Blue and Gold*. Carrington, mentioned as the art critic of the *Argus*, was, before that, cartoonist for Melbourne *Punch*. The "flint daggers" recalls that Prof. Spencer had been away amongst the Central Australian natives on several anthropological excursions and had brought to Melbourne many implements and weapons. Remus (*i.e.*, Uncle Remus) was A. H. Fullwood. "Prof." McCubbin spent the vacation, granted by the Gallery trustees, in a visit to Europe. Johnny was, of course, John Ford Paterson.

"At Prof. Spencer's,  
Sunday, 21st April, 1907.

Dear Bulldog,

Spencer *is* a fine fellow. He's helped so much with my Exhibition, which opened with a 'view' yesterday. Fink, Felix

Meyer, Bland and Mrs. Holt, Panton, Wm. Maloney and scores of others, all the Pinschofs, and the result of sales, added up by Herbert and the Prof. last night, amount to £1213—a good start. Thank the Lord I brought out a few of my old frames, and got Thallon to make 'em by dozens. My frame bill about £100 or more, and rent and printing and salaries, etc., about £100. After long prospecting I had to be content with Athenaeum. I had 8 heavy screens made, 14 feet by 6.6 high. At the last moment the old fossil Secretary of Athm. would not let them up, so off we scooted *fortunately*, and I took the Hibernian—3 times the space. £4 spent in hessian covered the screens and place. The invitations out for the Athenaeum a week before. I had to send 'em all over again for the 'Hibernian.' Pictures went in on Thursday morning, were hung by Friday mid-day, and on Saturday morning at 10 a few came in and bought (only about 70 or 80 before lunch. I told Spencer a big crowd in afternoon. He said, 'Oh, no, not so many as morning'). From 4 to 5 the large floor was covered and quite an exciting rush for pictures. The Prof. S. predicted that I wouldn't sell. Prices too high, and did his best to lower them. I hung on, also did Herbert, and they sold splendidly. A large one sold to the Adelaide Gallery a week before, so I did not show it, as the Melb. Trust had *not* seen it.

Lord, the rush of it all has knocked me out. Without the inexhaustible Prof. here I'd never have got it through.

'Prof.' McCubbin may take it on as soon as my fortnight is up, when I shall retire from the business. The Trustees have granted him 6 months' leave from 1st May—full pay—and they provide a temporary teacher during his absence—he's been on the jury in a divorce case the last few days. Imagine the Prof. mixed up in divorce proceedings. I told him you'd be anxious to know the truth of the dreadful affair, and if the lady was pretty, etc. I told him I was quite shocked at his being mixed up in the affair and nothing could excuse him! He was here to dinner on Friday with Norman Lindsay, our Johnny (Oh, aye) and Withers. Great fun.

I took Lady Clarke round the show yesterday. Carrington is the *Argus* critic, and asked me yesterday where I'd been studying, and where I was born. Was I a native, etc., and all the trivial stuff he might read up in the files 18 years ago. Also



SMIKE TO BULLDOG

asked if all my works were originals—think of it. It's a dam good job my success doesn't depend on the Press.

Very glad to hear of the success of Remus's monotypes. I hope they are still going. If I had them here I could sell them just now, I'm sure. I'm going to swap with the Prof. for a few of his precious flint daggers, boomerangs, etc.

Best wishes, and to 'K.', if you see him. Give me news of him.

Yours ever,

SMIKE.

The lessee of the Hibernian Hall (Mr. Sangston) is my landlord. I rent the place from him and give him £3 a week wages. He's a showman, handy to me in all ways. He's the commissioner of works and is full of ideas and tips, and is worth £10 to me. He's a perfect godsend, and also amuses Spencer and myself. He has postponed his entertainment, which takes place every night.

(Give me news of 'K.', if you can—and remember me kindly to them both.)

A.S."

He is now making arrangements to move across to Sydney for another show and to paint a few more pictures. The Julian Rossi named was evidently Julian Rossi Ashton, so very well known as teacher and painter (he lived to be called locally the Grand Old Man of Australian Art). Fred Leist and Sydney Long are both N.S.W. artists of note; Caleb was the Bulldog's young (and only) son.

"29 May, 1907.

C/o H.H.S.,

Junction,

Camberwell.

My dear Bulldog,

I have taken the trouble to copy a circular sent to Herbert, thinking it may interest you and artist friends generally. It's curious coming out just on the close of my show. The Hibernian is naturally the place for it, too. I'm a little afraid the British artists of repute may be a trifle shy, after their experience of Christmas. However, it's *their* business.

It's glorious weather here, and Stanley is trying for Ashton's old studio for me (the N.S.W. Society's by-laws prevent them

PROPOSED EXHIBITION OF BRITISH PICTURES

letting me their vacant gallery). Souter tells me that he and Julian Rossi and Leist and Long are going to have a show on their own. I think Stanley is fixing up renting my place all right. As soon as I get his wire, I'll pack, and make things hum in N.S.W. I *may* sell a few up there. I have still 70 to 80 pictures and I want to paint there as well. The boys there are anxious to see me go up there, at least the ones mentioned.

I'm extremely sorry to say that Arthur Collingridge is dead; he had some accident, or paralysis, I fancy. He has left a large family, and was a splendid fellow and very human. I heard it from Lister and also from Souter.

Prof. McCubbin left here a week ago by German 'Prinz Heinrich.' Well, I hope he'll have a good time; he deserves it. You'll introduce him at the Chelsea Club and I hope make him an Hon. Member, etc. He sold about £400 and had a good purse given by his admiring students. They gave him a *grand* evening.

Well, Bulldog, write me all the news (I was glad of your last), and please tell me *how many* Australians are in the R.A. this year. (The cables here only gave 5 or 6 names, and I *want* to know, and get a par in with my name.) And how is Remus? I think I wrote him last. I hope things are better for him. Spencer and I at Blacks' Spur for a week. Grand country, and a fine walk to Marysville and back in a torrent of rain. I'm bringing back a lot of his splendid prints.

Yours ever,

SMIKE."

"101 Swanston St.,  
Melbourne.

28 May, 1907.

*Enclosure:*

To Herbert Streeton, Esq.

Dear Sir,

It is proposed to hold an Exhibition of British Loan Pictures in Melbourne during the autumn of next year, 1908. R. Murray Smith, Esq., is chairman of the movement; J. Lake, Esq., manager; and R. Bryon Moore, Esq., treasurer.

It is thought that, owing to the prosperous condition of the State and the present revival of interest in art, that the Exhibition should be as successful as one of a similar kind held here

about 15 years ago. It is thought probable that pictures may be purchased from the Exhibition under the Felton Bequest, and also that the other States may, as before, be purchasers.

It is necessary to get together a Guarantee Fund of not less than £1,200 for this purpose. The Guarantee Fund at present stands as follows: Mr. F. S. Grimwade, £100; Mr. George Chirnside, £100; Mr. Molesworth Green, £50; Miss Bertha Bors, £100; Mr. Theodore Fink (amount not yet specified); Mrs. Staughton (amount not yet specified); and there are six others who have said they will give support. May I add your name? Will you let me hear from you or shall I call upon you?

It is confidently expected that the guarantors will not lose any of the money they guarantee, and that the Exhibition will entirely pay its way.

Yours faithfully,

(MISS) BERTHA BORS, Hon. Sec."

But, just before that, Streeton had found the week with Spencer at the Blacks' Spur a pretty strenuous holiday. The versatile and forceful Professor apparently walked too fast and had too much information to give away. Lindt's Hermitage, perched high on the spur between Healesville and Marysville, was quite a famous guest-house of the period. The artist had to tell T.R. (Roberts was popularly known by those initials) all about the trip. Here is his account. (Citriodora is the most fragrant of the Eucalypts. The scent of the leaves as they burnt had a strong nostalgic effect upon T.R.)

"Lindt's Hermitage,  
Black Spur.

23 May, 1907.

My dear 'Bulldog,'

I've just had dinner after a tramp to Marysville with Spencer. We set out at 9.45 a.m. after a deal of impatience and rushing on his part. I sat peacefully digesting my coffee and eggs, etc., on the verandah.

We started, and after keeping to his feverish pace for a hundred yards, I tumbled to my own, knowing it to be 10 to 14 miles there, and I didn't care if he slowed down or not. He's been working too hard, and has such an active mind that his legs

must follow. He kept on explaining the bush, and showing me some things (technically) I knew nothing of, and many I had felt from childhood; and where I'd pull up for a passing  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint, and a pipe, he'd tell me to wait till we got to so and so. 'Damme,' I said, 'I want it now.' The great thing is to live in the present. However, we must all live our own life, and I never interfere with his. After lunch we started on our return, and the rain set in, and we trudged on, with the up and down of hills and all our front soon wet. However, both of us comfortable (I had a sweater on, nice and warm), my only difficulty being a weak ankle. I had an accident coming out of the bathroom at Pinschof's and it hampered me a trifle. And the rain kept on till we got home. Prof. slipped his things off and hurried into dinner. I took my time and had a hot bath and cold shower and warm change and sat down feeling splendid.

We return to Melb. to-morrow! Then I get through various little jobs, and signing cheques for frames for about £230 and try for a room in Sydney.

Then, perhaps, work in Venice for a month on my way home and arrive Chelsea, perhaps, end of Oct. or November.

The Prof. had a great evening at the Conservatorium, *swarms* of pretty girls, students and friends; he had a great time, and a purse of sovereigns, and he left by the German ship 'Prinz Heinrich,' 21st.

Hall is working very hard, and is as fine as ever. He would love to have got up here, but could not get away.

Let me know how you all get on at the Exhibition this year. Spencer is drying some leaves of the beautiful 'Citriodora' for you to burn in your place. Best wishes to you and Mrs. T.R. and Caleb and Remus.

Yours ever,

ARTHUR STREETON.

Have you any news of 'K.?'?"

The two letters which come next were written in Sydney, one on 14th July, 1907, the other at intervals up to 1st September. They went to T.R. (still in London) under one cover. The show had been a failure compared with that held in Melbourne, and, but for the fascination of the harbour and the beautiful setting of the city, he would be glad to get away.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

"14 July, 1907.  
Sunday.

PFAHLERT'S HOTEL,  
SYDNEY.

My dear Bulldog,

I came home here dead tired to-night. Hanging my Exhb. upstairs in the Market Buildings, George St., assisted greatly by brother Stanley and good old 'Jim' Conroy. 100 or so Oils and Water-colors nearly all hung in one day. I have splendid space and excellent light. I found it with the faithful Jim. He is a dear old fellow, very fond of his young nephews and nieces, and is full of good points. I am very fond of him and admire him greatly.

I miss Chelsea and the Club boys who filled the cider club. (I wonder you didn't care for cider; it's pleasant and very cheap, 5/- a doz. quarts, 4 to the gallon.) An ideal beverage for a livery man like me.

Coogee is as lovely as ever, and, thanks to the stodgy and conservative, easy-going folk here, it's not improved since I saw it last 11 years ago. I have a long panel drying at Coogee, also one at Bronte, also 2 done in one day (last Sunday) at Johnny Sandes, Darling Pt. The frames are being made and the pictures are coming in for the Show, an hour or two's work. But 20 guineas framed every time, Sir—or nothing. I'm keeping the Melbourne prices up here and chancing it. Tho' in Melb. they are much more cultivated and more interested in Music and Fine Art. I feel convinced about it, and am thankful I showed there first.

Sydney interest is, for me, all in its surroundings—its fascinating, warm, grey sky and yellow rock and purple sea and long, undulating shore lines and luxurious languor of expression; it's semi-eastern, and there's some chord for that in most of us. The people don't interest me as much as in Melb. There seems a much greater number of aimless drunks in the city at night than in the Southern Capital.

Lister and others meet for coffee in the same place—Cafe Francais—but I found them very dull. They have it all their own way (they are very kind, of course), tho' their damned by-laws won't allow of their taking a substantial rent for their rooms from another artist. However, I have a better place and my own for the time, and people offering kindly assistance all

round (men I never met before), all except the poor old 'Dingbats.'

There is talk in the press from the students of the need of a Govt. School, as in Melb. If so, Lambert or you would be a good man for them, if they could get him or you, and I'll say so if the occasion arises. I think the poor old Society is half afraid it may come off.

Oh, the country in Victoria and the coast especially here is most lovely, but I *must* return by December for the shows, which took me years to get into. If I stayed here I'd be hard up in a couple of years and striving with the other chaps for pupils, so I return, and, I think, to marry—'entre nous,' strictly.

My health has been very good since I left England, better than here in the old days. I'm more careful. And the best woman friend I have is in England, and that, I think, settles it.

Yours,

SMIKE."

"Pfahlert's Hotel,  
Sydney.

1907.

My dear Bulldog,

In two days I shall close up my Sydney Show after ten days. It's a fine, large, well-lit place I found here upstairs in the New Market Building, George St. (The 'New Society' is forming again and is taking the place after me, and some Women's Exh. after them. It's funny—in Melb. there were 4 or 5 shows after mine there.)

But, apart from my Show being a frost after Melbourne, the people here are a long, long way behind Melbourne folk, and I find many people say so, without my mention of the matter. In street pavements, and general control of the city. And yet the people are very prosperous, as in Victoria. But I'm told they are behind in Sydney in Literature, Fine Art and Music, and my own observation and reflection confirms this opinion.

First day's sales in Melb.	£1200
do. Sydney	100
During a week's show	108

So I'll be glad to close up (I think a very presentable Exhn.) and get to work on the commissions I have for Melb. Why,

Robertson & Moffat bought £60 worth and gave me commissions to do two 20-guinea water-colors of Sydney, and Baillieu wants a picture of his native Queenscliff, and I'll make it £100.

I'll get all this through, I hope, and be able to leave Melb. in October and *just* be in nice time for all the dam bad lights, and fogs and hoarse cries of coalmen, etc.

The Harbor and the long promontories look as glorious as ever, and I wish I could settle among it all. But I must get back. What is there for one here? I could paint a couple of years free and then be condemned to get half-a-dozen pupils at 2 or 3 guineas a quarter, as all the other chaps here do; and then if I got to London again, I'd have to serve *another* apprenticeship before I got into the shows there.

The Sydneyites are quite provincial after Melb.—they only bought the few panels I painted here. I did two from J. Sandes' place one Sunday at Darling Pt., one before lunch and one after, long panels, and they both sold at 20 guineas. They only want their harbor. However, I'll do as much as I can down here—and scoot.

And how are things with you? I've had many enquiries after you and Longstaff, and they all ask how is he doing. I can only reply to all of them that I presume you're doing well, for I never know from you or J.L. how much you get or anything. It's your business—as I tell people who ask me. And Remus, I hope he's getting along better; he's near my old Cider Club now.

A cheque to cover the 6/- a week was sent to my landlord's long ago.

1st September.

I'm sorry that this letter and the one written at Pfahlert's were not posted, but I've been devilish busy, and letting all things slide in order to get Painting again. This is written at Miss Bladen's, Mosman, the old gentleman is pretty much of an invalid, but the place is quiet for me and handy for work.

I've done a good many panels of Cremorne and the lovely Southern Shore, and yesterday I opened fire on a 48 x 48 about 200 yards above the camp. It's still as wild and thick as ever, and one can paint all day and never see a soul. It's a great change and rest for me.

The lovely old Banksia trees and a great deal of native flowers and the lovely pale blue waters beyond.

PROSPEROUS TIMES

I'll write again soon. I've bought some Lindsay drawings.  
Best wishes and to Mrs. T.R.

Yours ever,

SMIKE."

Next we hear of him at Queenscliff (Vic.), where he is executing his commission for Mr. Baillieu and doing a number of other sketches, the telephone keeping him posted of the progress of still another successful show, a short one of five days this time. Roberts is addressed at "44 Kenilworth Court, Putney." It is noted that the Prof. (McCubbin) has finished his trip to the old world and has started on the return journey. As he left Melbourne on 21st May, he had been in England or on the Continent since about the end of June. Leslie Wilkie, later to be Director of the Adelaide National Gallery, acted as Master of the Drawing School in his absence. "Dad" (Charles Henry Streeton, who lived to be 102) was Head Teacher of the Queenscliff school in 1874.

"Ozone Hotel,  
Queenscliff.

5 Oct., 1907.

Dear Bulldog,

In 8 days it will be exactly a year since I got aboard the 'Everton Grange' at Liverpool. In 12 days I join her in Melbourne for the return voyage. My third and best Exhn. closed to-day in Collins St. (open for 5 days only). Nearly all my panels (of Sydney) went the 1st day (about the same size as one you have of Mosman's) 20 x 25, at 30 guineas each. Herbert tells me on telephone from Camberwell that 2 more have gone—that's, I think, 16 or 17 pictures sold out of 21, a total of about £325 to £350. You see, that, when not *actually* painting, I'm quite a business man. Damme, I think I can give Herbert points sometimes. I often see a thing that he overlooks which is important.

I'm here having an excellent time free of charge, and everything I like, Schnapper fishing thrown in, and doing a commission of Queenscliff for Baillieu—30 x 20—Fifty guineas, and I've kept that price on nearly all I've shown of that size, sometimes realizing 60 and twice 75—and why not? I've given the chaps here a lesson—to put an extra penny on these prosperous times.



SMIKE TO BULLDOG

Nearly all of this panel series of Sydney were done in one sitting, 26 inches x 7, with a slight covering of them indoors and framing. This morning I did a 30 x 20 on the cliffs, etc., and I think another sitting may complete it—if not, I'll do a third.

This afternoon I did another better one, 18 x 14 (Saturday), and on Monday I go up in the afternoon. Hall does the C. Minor of Beethoven at the evening Concert. Hall is an excellent golfer; last Sunday he went round at Port Melbourne in 81 strokes—bogey is 79.

Bill Watson and Jack Muchmore and other old fishermen on the pier to greet me, seeing my name in the papers and talk of the 'Dad' who used to teach them all at school here about 30 years ago. The 'Dad' and I had a fine day at Coogee before I left. He is about 78. We lunched at the Hotel—a bottle of wine each, cigar—and he rambled under the honeysuckles and I tied a 30 x 20 canvas to a tree and worked all the afternoon, and it's in the Show at Collins St.

I hope this finds you all well, also Remus. I hear the Prof. is off home again, although they gave him an extra month's leave. I'm sorry I missed him there. It must have been fine. I'll get to Liverpool about mid-December, returning with same good skipper.

Best wishes.

Yours ever,

SMIKE.

P.S. I have a fine Aboriginal collection, incl. 5 knives and 4 churingas and Bull Roarers."

We swing now right across the world; the next we hear from Streeton he is at 10 Hill Rd., Abbey Road, London, and the date is 7 August, 1908. He had evidently carried out his intention of stopping at Venice on the way, for the *Arthur Streeton Catalogue*, which he issued in 1935, lists over 80 pictures painted in Italy that year. His marriage to Miss Clench had taken place earlier in the same year.

"Dear Bulldog,

No news of our poor old K. Isn't it very sad? I thought of our Heidelberg times the other day. The brilliant clear blue

mornings with the faint Dandenongs and the round she-oaks on the way to the station, and the run down to the 'Old England' and Williams and the gruff old landlord and his daughters and Finney and the Frasers and Oleander and Japonica and Pine cones scattering on the dewy grass (the size of cabbages). And the thick small cypress trees near the Tennis Court where the balls used to hide, and the Fair Open hilltop where K. did his 'Evening Star' and the row of Hazels and Pear trees and Pines round the well and the indigestible short cut to Ivanhoe; and the long warm afternoons of coppery light. Would you believe it, 19 years ago. Heigh Ho, yet here we are, most of us.

I feel most fortunate—most happy—and my wife could not be better. I've sold a few of the Venetians to some rich friends and we've been staying at their homes in the country, motors at our service, etc., and I paint a good deal of the time, as well as play tennis. We are off to Slangham, near Three Bridges, in Sussex, on Monday, and after 3 days there we go to Bamburgh Castle, somewhere on the N. East coast. It is the Castle of 'Lancelot,' and the present owner, Lord Armstrong (the gun maker) spent £400,000 restoring the place. Friends of ours have taken the place for 2 months, so I'm taking up one or 2 sizes of big canvas. The postcards show it as a grand subject overlooking the sea. It was painted by Turner, and for once I'm glad I haven't seen Turner's picture. I feel quite free.

These rich friends of Nora's that we stay with, and who are beginning to buy, are, I'm glad to say, most simple and quiet people themselves, and I get on quite easily with them. Sometimes the guests aren't quite so nice and quiet, but they don't matter much, and one forgets them, and we trot off together, and get in the woods and nice places.

I still have a few of the Venetians here. I wonder if you could run up on Saturday or Sunday at all. We go off on Monday to Sussex—Telephone 3429, 'Post Office, Hampstead.'

Best wishes and to Mrs. T.R., and write us a letter if you can't come up with Mrs. Bulldog.

Yours ever,

SMIKE."

Letters between May, 1909, and September, 1910, are variously headed, one coming from Abbey Road, one from Corfe Castle, one from Leeds. None is of more than domestic

interest. In July, 1912, the Australian colony in London was stirred by a report that "about a dozen portraits at £250 each were wanted at Melbourne," presumably by the Gallery. A Mr. Peter Mackey had called on Streeeton with the news, which he, in turn, had passed on to Roberts, James Quinn, George Coates, John Longstaff and others who might be interested. There is no further reference to this matter. Many of these letters, by the way, have sketches in them by Streeeton, outlines in small of the pictures in hand at the moment.

World War No. 1 had been raging three years before the date of the next letter from Streeeton to T.R. Most of the Australian artists in England had been serving in various capacities. Both Roberts and Streeeton did good work in the Royal Army Medical Corps till the latter, after two years of it, had been invalided out. In 1918 he was given an appointment as war artist on the Western Front. This was written just prior to that appointment:

"10 Hill Rd.,  
Abbey Rd., N.W.8.  
21/12/1917.

Dear Roberts,

Thanks for your note; sorry you were not present last Monday. We gave a send off to Lambert, who leaves for Palestine to paint for the Australian Govt. My agitation for a comprehensive war memorial (decorations, etc.) has ceased. I did my best, and a cable has been despatched giving Australia the news of Canada's plan, about 60 artists now, I understand, including Quinn, Coates and myself. I am glad to state that the agitation has had one definite result. Early in the year Australia House snubbed some of us Australians who wished to paint for Australia. Longstaff was put off by Fisher, who advised him not to go, and F. informed Mackennal and Spencer that I wasn't wanted, etc., etc. After waiting 8 or 9 months, I gave up the idea and told them so, and was then offered 3 months—Dec., Jan., Feb.—and refused it. I agitated for a big plan like Canada's. The original number to be commissioned by *Australia House* was determined in Aug. to be 5 or 6. It is now stated that *all* Australian artists are invited to execute commissions for Australia.

## DEATH OF McCUBBIN

I have an excellent commission for Canada to paint the Training Camp at Valcentier, near Quebec.

The meeting I called to form an Australian Society became unruly, and I handed over the minutes incomplete and resigned interest. It may be formed yet or not. I do not know.

Yours ever,

ARTHUR STREETON."

The Prof.'s death was the first break in a chain of friendship which had stretched over so many years. Here Streeton expresses his sorrow:

"10 Hill Road,  
N.W. 8.

28 Dec., 1917.

Dear 'Bulldog,'

Just a line in case you did not see it in the *Times* of the death of Prof. McCubbin.

I knew he was getting on in years, but there was nothing about him (when I was last at his place, near Toorak) that he was going to die, and I feel the loss of him, and there is nothing in Europe to remind one of the old days, when he and the Don used to meet us at Mentone, and Box Hill, in the cool evenings after hot dry days and our work. The walks from Box Hill on Sunday evenings to Camberwell or Surrey Hills, and the long afternoons and evenings at Heidelberg, the drive and its pine trees, and the well, and double line of Hazel bushes, and the myriad memories of these old places, are connected with McCubbin, Abrahams, Conder and Withers, and they are gone, with Patterson, Mather, and McHugh Paterson, and his dear old brother Johnnie.

I begin to feel quite an old fellow myself now. I have seen reproductions of the work of McClintock, who must be quite a fine Australian landscape painter; and Heysen has done fine Australian work. The dear old Prof. has painted a fine lot of pictures of Australia, with the real thing in them, and I hope someone may collect and exhibit them all together, and I hope he was able to put something by for his wife. We shall all miss him very much.

Yours,

ARTHUR STREETON."

The next two letters, written in pencil, are headed "France, 2nd Divisional Headquarters, A.I.F." They are dated 6th July and 20th July, 1918. His remark that he was working hard is supported by the fact that the Streeton *Catalogue* lists nearly 200 pictures from the sketches he made as war artist. The "big" man referred to as wounded on 19th July was probably General Rosenthal, who was sniped in the arm at Villers Bretonneux.

"My dear Roberts,

A line or two to let you know I'm well and having a fine time over here. I've still another 6 weeks to go before my return. I've done a lot of work, turned out at a great pace, but it's all one can do here, rapid studies. It's all too restless and exciting for the repose necessary for fine art, and I can't tell how my efforts will look till I return and see them in a quiet room.

The second stunt (by our fine fellows) since my arrival opened out on 4th at 4 a.m., great bursts of fire and a devil of a noise, violent and sudden displacement of the air through the quiet trees, very exciting and impressive.

Our H.Q. are all in deep dug-outs about 30 or 40 feet below, not well lit and very damp air—something like a long alleyway along the bottom of a ship, and we are glad to get out into the warm bright air again. But they are necessary, as we are only 6,000 yds. back from the line.

As a result of this last stunt, I hope in a day or so to be working in the historic village twice taken from the Bosche by our men and hung on to by *them* this last time. It's been too hot for anyone to paint in so far, and the dear old Cathedral town (with its P. de C. decorations—I think they are removed) is an awful mess now. I got a few drawings and a water-color there under shellfire, and have been through it several times. It *is* a sad sight. I'd seen it in its prime.

I haven't been in the air yet, but hope soon to have a flight. My brother is well, and not far from me, tho' he was only recently up North. My nephew arrived recently from the East and is with the Royal Irish Fusiliers somewhere—Lieutenant, 21 or 22, but has had experience in the land where Lambert has gone to.

STREETON AS WAR ARTIST

I hope Caleb is well, also you and Mrs. T.R., to whom my best wishes.

Yours ever,  
ARTHUR STREETON,  
Hon. Lieutenant.

The U.S. chaps were most keen on our fellows and on fighting with them; they got their chance when we opened up on 4th July, zero at 4 a.m., and a remarkable thing is the instinctive and *strong affinity in sympathy* that exists between Australian and Scotch troops. It is in evidence *everywhere*. How does one account for it? It's there, and I understand it, being here on the spot. Oh, it's a quaint business here. And Australians, I thought I understood at the 3rd London, but it's *necessary* to see and know them here to properly appreciate the manhood of Australia absolutely. The fights against fire and flood and thirst in the Bush, all tell in the field here and bring out the finest in them. The resource as a consequence of Australian life is remarkable and has to be seen and observed here, which is a great privilege. I'm glad I've not missed it. A.S.

The country and the trees all along the Somme, I need hardly say, are lovely. I hope to reflect something of it all in a few canvases I want to paint on my return."

"France,  
20-7-1918,  
2 Div. A.I.F. H.Q.

My dear Roberts,

I was glad to get your letter, also the previous one, before I left London, and here I'm trying to write at 11.45 p.m. in my bunk, and it takes a bit of doing, as the bottom of the bunk overhead is only 2 inches from my writing pad. But I think it's always nice to do things when you want to. This dug-out is about 16 x 14 by 8 high, and, like all the others (about 60 or 80), exceedingly damp, being about 40 feet below surface level, splendidly strong to hold the weight and thrust, as quiet, damp and dark as a tomb and leading off a main alleyway like the bottom of a ship and about 200 yards long. The air knocked several out, and they had to go and sleep up somewhere—with 'dog's disease' influenza. But with great care, and keeping my

clothes wrapt in my trench coat, I've been lucky and escaped so far (and I touch wood every time, Sir!).

Our Div. has, since my arrival, launched about 4 stunts, all successful, and to-night I watched what looked like the start of another by the *French*—down south a few miles. Yesterday our "big" man came home with his thumb and wrist sniped; he was watching things about the same place where I was sketching the day before, slightly Sth. of V.B., and there's gas about, and I fortunately missed that. But it's most exciting and novel to see the great 'Key' for the first time; and the grand old Cathedral town, due west of us in a straight line. It's in a fearful mess. I went in an ambulance (Written later) to an old town due north from here, and behind a dressing station and up a steep hill, where I had a fine view of the valley with a flat covered with lovely trees and the Somme winding through and the towers of the old church of C. and other villages and V.B. on the distant sky line—a grand spread, and the area of battle, shell bursts, and shrapnel occasionally spotting a fine sky. But everything here must be done rapidly or left alone. The Commonwealth Govt. want the work to be *descriptive*. I don't know how my things will look on my return, but I'm making many pencil studies for larger work in oil and observing all I can.

I hope your big son may soon be home on leave; it will be a great day for you and Mrs. Roberts, to whom my best regards and wishes.

Yours truly,

ARTHUR STREETON, Lieut."

The artist in Streeton could see the picturesque in the commonplace, and even in the sordid details of war. He appears to have enjoyed his experiences in France, always, of course, with the knowledge that his wife and son were no farther away than England. T.R. was then serving with the Third London General Hospital, Wandsworth.

"France,

31 July, 1918.

Dear Roberts,

It has been a grand day here, and I sit at the tent door. I washed and changed early to-day and feel refreshed; below me the steep little gully, all green with upright trees, and the

## WORKING IN FRANCE

last afternoon light all golden like Australia catches the stems in patches and is diffused among the foliage in most beautiful fashion. Our blankets are dry, our news is cheerful, and the dogs' disease seems to have disappeared. Some of our batmen off duty are larking about among the tree trunks below and bombing one another with lumps of clay and chalk, aircraft pass at great pace overhead, guns boom to the Eastward, an occasional shell cuts its shrill course thro' the hot air, and the mules are whinneying with their falsetto tones for their meal. Horses' tails swish to and fro, the boys still larking around, the pigeon post goes out on a motor-bike, and now all is quiet for a moment, an occasional file or group move through the gully (every man with his gas helmet, needless to say). In a few minutes I go down to our mess and have a 'spot,' and then the band marches down and takes up its station by the Flag and it's quite pleasant to hear them all thro' dinner and on into the cool twilight—guns going all the time—and all our staff spruce and smart, and larking around like boys at school.

Well, the anniversary of Declaration of War is close to us now—and . . .

It will be nice to get to London again and catch hold of my little Oliver again and see his mother. I got a grand postcard from him to-day; the dear little chap urges me with most comical spelling not to forget the Bosch Helmet and the tops of the bombs. He got the address all right except 'FARNCE.'

I'd like to come over again, but I'll have lots of work as soon as I return, and also to go to Canada to do a big one for Canadian War Records.

Yours truly,  
ARTHUR STREETON, Lieut."

Again in pencil, and again from 2nd Div. H.Q. in France, is a letter dated 31st October. In it the names of some of the places visited were omitted or disguised for safety reasons. "Dingbat Alley" was apparently Peronne; "Mount St. Q." was Mont St. Quentin, where Streeton did many sketches; "V.B." was obviously Villers-Bretonneux.

"31.10.1918.

Dear Roberts,

A line or so to let you know I'm over here again to do a



second series of 'Art Records' for Commonwealth Govt. The last time I worked in the area between Amiens, Heilly and Villers-Bretonneux, the last two places very very "unhealthy" (as they call it). Now I'm at P . . ., about 40 miles east, tho' it took the train from Amiens from 1 p.m. till 7 p.m. to do it. But it's a novel experience arriving here at night, when everything is dark, and something to tumble over ready for you everywhere. Carrying one's kit and bed and materials is sometimes a job—but everything comes to an end, and you arrive somewhere where you can sit down with a candle and a pipe and digest the impressions of the day.

The whole impression of this old ruined town is almost more dramatic and tragic than Amiens, tho' that is bad enough. The whole battlefield from V.B. up to here is remarkable for its desolation and the horrible litter of the war. And this narrow street, from which I write, is about 400 yds. long, going down hill to the river (there's not a whole roof anywhere in the town, not a pane of whole glass; we use substitutes of whatever we can find). This is called officially 'Dingbat Alley.' 90% of the houses are quite smashed up, and the front to the street yawning what is left of their interiors. The building I'm in is a little more solidly built, but it's nearly all gone, and there's not a room (and there are about 20) without holes in the roof. The general (who left with staff 2 days ago) had a small room with only 3 walls.

But it's wonderful what the Australian batmen can do. They fossick around, and soon you have an old stove put in, pipes roughly joined to it, and a fire burning in no time. They are resourceful to a degree—wonderful men. They build a bunk in about 10 minutes—and it was like parting from Australia when they all left, the 'Don AC' moving back to rest with the others 30 or 40 miles back. So the only ones who sleep in this gruesome street are myself, a Tommy who looks after me as well as he can (labor battalion), also Pte. Purcival, A.I.F., a student from Sydney, who came up on my move order from H.Q. He's doing records. But you ought to see the place, and wander home to bed down this alley. I wonder if you ever saw Jimmy Pryde's picture, *The Murder House*. It did look weird and tragic. But this dead street beats everything I've seen. Fortunately the Area Commandant is a fine chap, a Colonel, soldier all his life, and he is extremely kind, and I get on first râte with him, and have my

## ARMISTICE

meals at his place, where he looks after other officers who get to Peronne—there's nowhere else to get food.

The famous Mount St. Q. is like V.B., a gradual rise that dominates the town, but has no bold cliff or big marks about it to speak of. However, I'm making pencil studies of it and hope to do something of it later.

We've had 4 or 5 lovely bright days, and now it is turning wet, bad luck—still, I'm getting something done. The experience is worth any amount of hardship, and meeting the Australians that I have met is worth any amount of trouble. They are wonderful. They are great men, all of them.

Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STREETON."

There is one more letter of the year 1918. It was written in London shortly after the Armistice, but he is not yet free of the war work. His congratulations to Caleb Roberts, T.R.'s son, are for the M.C. awarded to Caleb, who had been serving with an English regiment in Palestine. T.R. served for 3½ years with the R.A.M.C. in the Third London General Hospital, ending as Sergeant.

"10 Hill Rd.,  
Abbey Rd., N.W.8.  
28.11.1918.

Dear Roberts,

I was very glad to get your letter of 13th Nov., just when I received my 'Move' order on 24th at Le Cateau. Unless one has been to France it's difficult to understand the physical effort required for travelling even 20 miles—the shortage of transport, etc. I arrived here 2 evenings ago, and I feel very lucky indeed that I'm confined to my room here, instead of being in hospital in France. However, I think I'll be about again in a few days, and get on with my work again. I've seen all the desolate area from Villers Bretonneux to Bellecourt (one of the entrances to the Tunnel). From there to Le Cateau the villages improve. The 3 grand rose windows at Amiens Cathedral are beautiful as ever—little damage. I've been lucky, saw also part of Cambrai, Bapaume, Albert, Pozieres, Bourlon Wood, etc. It must have been lively in London on Armistice day, and I fancy Paris let herself go properly. We had a bonfire in the Square at Peronne,

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

and burnt the Kaiser, and I got him burning in my sketch before the bonfire was built.

A lot of my records are still at the cloak room at Victoria Station. However, there's no hurry, and I hope to have an Exhibition of my efforts later on, if I can make suitable arrangements.

I am glad you will soon be out of the 3rd London and congratulate you on sticking it so well and so long. Give my best wishes and congratulations to Caleb, please, and to his mother. She will enjoy the sight of his fine decoration also.

Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STREETON."

Roberts returned to Australia in December, 1919, and left again for England just twelve months later. He was in the old country when Smike's next communication reached him. That was headed "The Grey Tower, 49 Murphy St., South Yarra, 1st March, 1921," for Streeton had come back to Melbourne for a time. A spirited, truculent-looking bulldog is drawn as an accompaniment to the greeting. The book *Art of Arthur Streeton*, published by Art in Australia Ltd., was issued in 1919, and there followed a special 'Arthur Streeton Number' of *Art in Australia* in October, 1931.

"My dear Bulldog,

I wanted to ask your permission to reproduce one or two of your pictures in a book I am publishing (with the guidance and help of *Art in Australia*, Sydney). They (the *Art in Australia* editors) commenced on a book of my work when I was away in France, and I had no say in it, no choice of pictures chosen for illustration, or control over the manner in which the prints were made. It turned out fairly well. But I think I can do a better one, and I wish to include an article on the 'Pioneers of Australian Art in Victoria'—Buvelot and yourself and 2 or 3 others, who were the first with a fine influence and to whom all of us a little younger owe so much. It has not yet been done. I want, therefore, to ask if you will kindly grant me permission to reproduce, say

Head of Prof. Laurie,

„ Spanish Beauty (the Don had it. It has been sold,  
and now I have to search for it),

STREETON ATTACKS DUTY ON ART

and one or two others, *if I can locate them*. So if you could respond by return post it would help me.

I'm going to hammer away at the Art duty again, and also on the necessity for improvement in the lighting of pictures in Australia. A word to the architects to build a light in their next houses for pictures.

The Melb. Gallery is hopeless, as I showed in my letter, 2 columns in *Argus* (for which I was paid, to my surprise, by a cheque).

Dr. Cunningham (*Argus*), Fink (*Herald*) and *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Telegraph* all give me fine backing in the Tax business. (Tax on pictures.)

Coates and his wife opened a *fine show* to-day at Athenaeum. But they had to pay duty on their pictures. I understand that Lambert (George Washington of N.S.W.) is coming out. I look forward to his arrival, and his protest.

Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STREETON (SMIKE)."

He is arranging his first show in Adelaide when he next writes. An addendum a fortnight later gives the impression that it was not a success.

"South Australian Society of Arts,  
Adelaide.  
15.7.1921.

My dear Bulldog,

To-day is 'Press Day,' and I sit at the desk and the Art Experts have their lists. This is a small Exhibition (27 exhibits) and my first in Adelaide. The place seems a bit drowsy after Melb. and Sydney, and I had days of delay in finding someone to open my cases, and someone also to act as Secretary for the Show. Luckily a charming Art Student with a car of her own came along and brought another, and we three addressed invitations all the morning; then her charming mother came with new names for my list, and others are equally kind. In 3 days my show opens, and next day I have a Secretary in charge and I go off to the hills and I'll take a canvas and paints as well.

I was glad to get your letter 3 or 4 weeks ago, and would have responded earlier, but I've been moving about painting at Sassafra, Olinda, and the Southern end of the Grampians

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

near Dunkeld, Mr. Harold Armytage's homestead, and painting quietly there I saw day after day *Emus* 8 or 10 and 11 at a time, feeding about the flat green places about the creek; also another day 3 big Kangaroos, and two Wedgetailed Eagles. These fine creatures all house in the rocky hills close by. Quite exciting to see them, and all across the foothills and plains grow grand old Red Gum. I'll post you a print of one fine specimen I studied, one with a grand spread of limbs. Fine architecture it had. Miss Marie Tempest has it, wanted it to give herself (as she said) a birthday present. She is a fine actress and is very kind and seems to have fine artistic outlook.

Re my second book by Art in Australia Ltd. I sent up to them the dummy of the book with probable illustrations of the Pioneers—Buvelot, yourself, McCubbin, Ball, Conder and others; and they wrote me that in view of the depression and *not too* good financial outlook it would be best to cut out everything except my own *recent* work for illustrations—to retain my Article on the Pioneers, etc., but to produce a book about half the dimensions, cost, etc., of last book and give one about £1/1/0. I feel so sorry at missing this chance of illustrating some of the works of the Pioneers.

26/7/1921.

This place seems much smaller in many ways than Melb. or Sydney, and business has not been too brisk. My works are being repacked for Melbourne, where both my wife and boy have influenza (a good deal of it in Sydney and Melb.), and I deliver a sort of lecture for them here at the Art Gallery on 28th at 8 o'clock and am now sitting down to put together some ideas for it.

The Coates did pretty well here—also Lambert, who is now in Sydney.

All good wishes.

Yours sincerely,  
(Smike)

ARTHUR STREETON."

Next month, from Melbourne, he announces his impending departure for the old world again, this time *via* America. But Australia is still calling.

BUYING LAND AT OLINDA

“C/- English, Scottish & Australian Bank,  
Collins St. W.,  
Melbourne.

13 Aug., 1921.

My dear Bulldog,

How goes it, and what is it like in London after Australia?

We shall be leaving here about next February and returning through Canada, as my wife wants to stay a while at St. Mary's (Ontario) at her old home and show off her boy (he's 10) and we should arrive at our old place, 10 Hill Rd., about June. I don't know whether we shall remain for many years yet in London. It's a dear old place, and yet so is Victoria, and Sassafras, and Olinda. I'm striving to buy, if I can get it cheap enough,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres on top of Olinda. The top part is cleared of all except about 10 fine Blackwoods, most beautiful trees (and the blossom, as you know, a soft yellow, like pale butter), and the lower part has some scrub and high timber and runs to the creek with ferns, etc., and there's just nice room for a little home, to be built with the blackwoods surrounding it, and when I come out again, building and materials may be less expensive. However, I'm trying to secure it in any case. Within 2 or 3 years the Morwell Electricity scheme will be in full swing, and Olinda will have electric light and sewerage.

The Coates went to Sydney and Brisbane and are now doing Adelaide. Lambert is thoroughly enjoying Australia, and is *very* keen on one of yours of Sassafras he saw at Gills.

With best wishes to Mrs. T.R. and you and Caleb.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR STREETON  
(Smike).”

One letter records something of the American visit.

“7 & 8 Brown's Buildings,  
Broad St.,  
Victoria, British Columbia.  
8 Aug., 1922.

My dear Bulldog,

This is the 8th, the anniversary of the Great Australian advance in 1918. Many happy returns of the day to Genl. Sir John Monash.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

I've been here about 10 days and have a nice studio (2 rooms), quite a good light in mornings for 2 months, at rate of 12½ dollars a month—about 14/- a week, and not to be found at the price or double the price in Gt. Britain or in Australia.

I've started 3 or 4 canvases on Observatory Hill, and I leave my canvases with the Superintendent there. He is kind, and has been waiting for an artist for years, so he is quite spoiling me, with every offer of assistance. The place really beats Sydney in some respects; to the South West the great Olympic Mountains pile up their snow tops apparently miles high, and to the East, when it clears, Mt. Baker, always snow covered, rises up like a vast Fuji, or whatever the Japanese mountain is called, and the immediate surroundings of Victoria, bold rocks and lovely curving bays and beaches. It, like Honolulu (1 week away to the S. West), has an almost perfect climate, *no dust*, no heat, no cold, no extremes; apparently only 7 or 8 flies, no ants, or mosquitoes, no pests whatever. And Vancouver also beautiful, the great Trade junction with the Orient, is only 5 or 6 hours by steamer.

My studio is 350 yds. from my Hotel, and 300 yds. from Govt. liquor store. I almost feel tempted to get a place here (it's only 3 weeks from Victoria to Sydney), and also have my place at Olinda. I shall move with my collection of pictures to New York. I dread the place somehow, but it is a big market, so to speak, and endeavour to arrange an Exh. to open early next year.

I return to my family, whom I really do miss, about the end of October, and am wondering if you will then be gone to Australia. I hope you will give me an Australian address, for I want to keep in touch.

All kind thoughts to Mrs. T.R. and Caleb.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR STREETON  
(Smike)."

Roberts must have been playing the part of mentor, for Streeton, while contrite, puts up a defence in his next epistle.

McComas would appear to be Francis McComas, a Tasmanian pupil of Julian Ashton. He settled in California in 1898. The others named are all better known, that is in Australia.

PRAISE FOR AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS

“10 Hill Rd.,  
Abbey Rd., N.W.8.  
20.12.1922.

My dear Bulldog,

Re our talk about my not having told other artists that I have liked their work, I rather feel I must have been, tho' unconsciously, unmannerly and mean. I feel like the poor devil who tried for admission to Heaven, and who confessed to St. Peter at the gate that he remembered having once given a poor man two pence, and Peter said take your two pence back and go to Hell.

But I really do remember that I praised and bought 3 Lindsay Drawings in 1907, and also bought the first Water Color McComas exhibited in Sydney. Also I praised the works of McInnes, Lambert, and Heysen, shown at Gill's place last year, and through the *Argus* hoped the Nat. Gallery would go and buy, particularly, McInnes' best work, for he was not then represented at the Gallery by 1 picture.

I was asked by Geelong Grammar School representative to suggest the name of a sculptor for their memorial. I said Web Gilbert at once—and he afterwards told me they came to him.

I wrote half a column in *Argus* on Coates' show in Athenaeum last year, considering their own critic's notice insufficient.

I enthused over Lambert's work last year to Spencer, Annear, *Art in Australia*, Vic. Mann, S. F. Mann, and Armytage (squatter), and others.

In 1920 I delivered a lecture in the Adelaide Art Gallery, at the request of the Governor of the Gallery, Sir Wm. Sowden, and in the lecture did full justice to the Art Pioneers and gave the full long list of our students who went overseas, and a list of their honors and achievements, and informed Adelaide of the remarkable development of Australian Art in the Eastern Cities, in the hope of stimulating them to follow their example. Oh! I've done quite a lot of applauding, but not so much to the men themselves.

If you feel that I have offended painters by my reticence out there, I'm not a bit above going into the confessional, as it were, and writing it in an article, if this would serve any useful purpose. Do you think it would? And is this feeling you have more evident in Ashton's field or sphere (Sydney)?



SMIKE TO BULLDOG

I feel horribly ashamed of my earlier indiscretion about the Prof. Good Land Alive! I suppose the poor old Don must have been humpy that I didn't praise his work. I must have been very self-centred. It could not have been vanity, because all that went into pink silk shirt and tie and brown boots I think.

A Happy Christmas and to Mrs. T.R.

Yours,

ARTHUR STREETON  
(Smike)."

The Bulldog and Mrs. Roberts took what proved to be their final farewell to London in January, 1923. How well Smike remembered the Dandenongs, where they were to settle, is shown in his first letter of that year. His old friend, the Prof. (McCubbin) had died in 1917. This letter has a wash sketch of the picture *Wren's Masterpiece*. No picture of that name, by the way, is listed in the *Streeton Catalogue*. An oil, 8ft. by 4ft., *S. Paul's*, painted 1923, is most likely the one referred to. The *Chinese Screen* was bought by the National Gallery of Victoria for £300 . . . Hardy Wilson's original drawings for his book, *Old Colonial Architecture*, were purchased a few years ago by the Commonwealth Government for £3,000.

"10 Hill Road,  
Abbey Road, N.W.8.  
7 May, 1923.

My dear Bulldog,

Very glad to get yours of March 20th this morning. We were reading our paper and sipping our early tea *in bed* with Oliver wedged in between us. He always comes down to us early.

It's refreshing to note how the old Dandenong Range takes hold directly you get there, and you own some land. I do feel so glad, and am now wondering if it's just near Sherbrooke Lodge. I noticed beautiful sites just to south of the Cottage about 200 yards, when Oliver and I were cutting a couple of fine hazel sticks in case of snakes, and there's a little forest of hazel just there and the outlook is toward the Southern Ocean, with the hills of Gembrook on left. I thought it a lovely place, and fancy that hard-headed old Nursery man had control of it. What *sort* of a garden you can have there, and build a shelter look-out to sit and smoke in and lie there looking at the Blue

STREETON PAINTINGS IN R.A.

Horizons to the East. Lord! I wish I were out there to-day, though we have just got the first burst of summer here, lilacs and everything in bloom.

I sent in two to R.A. 1 a most highly finished still-life of a good Chinese screen I bought in Sydney, canvas 50 x 40, and I had a nerve to send in another, 8 feet by 5, of *Wren's Masterpiece*, St. Paul's from top of the G.P.O., and I feel very lucky it's just over the line in a centre room, so one sees it from a distance through the Gallery entrance—a grey silhouette against light warm sky (*December*). Hardy Wilson has a lovely pencil picture centred, of an old apple tree, a *beautiful* thing.

I suppose you are now making your plans where you will go to paint, etc., and then getting your place built.

How it takes one back. I certainly missed the Prof. when I went out last time. His personality so very actual and different to others—poor old Boy, he ought to be alive now. I like his son; Louis is a fine fellow, from what I could see.

We'll have great yarns as soon as I can get out to work again.

Our best wishes to Mrs. Roberts and to you. Am *so* glad your wife likes it at Sherbrooke.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR STREETON

(Smike).

I feel ashamed there's so much of myself in this letter. I haven't seen any of the boys—been away so much—and my wife lost her mother (85) recently.

A.S.

Is Coates there still and his wife?"

Once more on the move, Streeton is heading again for Olinda and the dream cottage on the hilltop.

"10 Hill Road,

Abbey Road, N.W.8.

30 July, 1923.

My dear Bulldog,

I was delighted to get your little note this morning from South Sassafra.

I am hard at it here, studio a litter of pictures and frames, lists, etc., all to be cleared up and packed, so I may catch my steamer, 'Ulysses,' on Saturday, 11th Aug., from Liverpool,

arriving Melbourne 24 Sept.—and I'm stealing a spell, with your letter (and the map, for which my best thanks, most kind). I know your  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre, I think. After a chat with Returned Soldier at store, I walked up the road, and then turned in on left, just where your place is. I fancy there's a good A.I.F. chaplain about there, and Mernda Hill is just above you, due North. A fine situation. My place is (here follows a map of the Olinda district.—R.H.C.). And when I get out, your place will be built, I expect, and 'burning wood by the ton.' I hope you'll stack some for cooking chops, etc., later on, and I wonder if you have good water supply *storage*. I shall have to invest in *many tanks* up at Olinda, the roof being the only source up there at 1900 feet and pretty blowy at times, I expect.

By Jove what a lovely country it is up there on the Ranges. I'll get a little bungalow built of jarrah, I fancy, and hope to tempt my wife out to it. I've been waiting quietly, and I think she'll be glad to come out and settle in Australia. Am coming alone this time, as Oliver has a fine school and is doing well. I shall be busy, painting, exhibiting and publishing a book, building a house and planting more trees, and shall steer clear of Art Societies, I think; it leaves more time for one's work, to be *on your own*.

The Sydney Control seem to be having a lively time over their London Exhibition.

And Anderson is due in Australia early in July.

I expect that Mrs. Roberts will soon have a fine rose garden and hedges and fruit trees put in. I think she will get very fond of it, too, and you'll get to Melbourne *via* Belgrave and Fern Tree Gully. I only wish the dear old Prof. McCubbin had a place up in the Ranges also.

Yours,

ARTHUR STREETON  
(Smike)."

The two old friends were now back in Melbourne, or near it, Roberts settling in his final home at South Sassafras, Streeton to know several (he favored South Yarra and Toorak) before making Olinda his last dwelling place. A visit to Sydney had left him rather disgruntled. Duncan Anderson's name recalls the fact that it was on his station, "Brocklesby," in New South

SYDNEY AND JOHN RUSSELL

Wales, that Tom Roberts painted *The Golden Fleece* and *The Breakaway* . . .

“St. Neots,  
Domain Rd.,  
South Yarra.  
11.12.1923.

My dear Bulldog,

I've just returned from Sydney and very glad to be back, too.

I think I wrote you before of an attempt I made to get down to you from Sassafras (at Miss Murdoch's, where I was staying at the time), but I got thoroughly wet in heavy rain and hail and had to stop at Grendon, and talk with Mr. and Mrs. Mountain (and the lovely Miss Blackwood, who lives with them), and then I had to turn back. But I'll try again when next I go up—soon, I hope, to try and arrange to build some little house on my property.

It's curious that on calling in at the shop of Parker, George St., Sydney (a most reliable man), that he should tell me that Duncan Anderson had called in and enquired for me, and on hearing by Steamer at 12, told Parker he might come down and see me at Steamer. He did not come, and I missed him very much. I think Anderson is now 70. I saw my dear old Pater, and he was 96 on 17 November, and quite hearty and well. He lives in the open air, and my dear old sister May has looked after him well. His only difficulty is in writing letters, which he does well and legibly, but must have a strong light on the paper. The last evening I was with him a Dr. Russell called to see my sister's husband (McCrae). The Dr. motored me to his place, Coogee, and showed me 2 or 3 recent sketches by his uncle, John Russell, whom you and Harry Bates knew so well. John Russell is now with his wife and family in N.Z. I was astonished at the 3 or 4 sketches. One or two of Sydney. *Most uninteresting* in every way, and yet I have *such a definite* impression of a red chalk drawing done by him in Paris and an oil impression, 26 x 20, of women washing clothes in a pool at 'Belle Isle,' that I could almost reproduce a suggestion of them now. Mackennal has both, and it's some time since I saw them; but they both had the touch of a master about them.

I'm glad to be in Melb., where I have many friends. In Sydney there seems still the atmosphere of *Art Society* rather than of Art.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

Press cuttings from London, sent by my wife, intimate, one of them does, that Julian Ashton is the father of Australian Art and that almost all of us passed through his classes. I'm going to send them a few lines to correct this stupid impression. I was warned in London from Australia that this 'Exhn. in London' was an Ashton stunt. However, I trust that my book will yet put everybody in their proper place.

*Do write something* to me and tell me of Mrs. T.R. and the garden and yourself.

Oliver and his mother well.

Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STREETON."

But with the new year (1924), and in congenial surroundings, he is happy again. The self-portrait was asked for by the N.S.W. Gallery. It was presented by the artist. . . . Desbrowe Annear was one of Melbourne's leading architects.

"7 Fairlie House,  
Anderson Street,  
South Yarra.  
Windsor 6810.  
10 Feb., 1924.

My dear Bulldog,

I seem to be always missing you nowadays. I called at the Yorick Club and got your letter from Kew days after you had called there; and it was just the thing I wanted to lunch together and have a good yarn about everything.

I've got a year's lease at this place. It isn't a flat; it's a blooming observatory, a studio and 5 rooms—overlooking the Bay, Botanic Gardens, You Yangs, Macedon, Plenty Ranges, Warburton and the Heights 50 miles further to the Eastward. I feel very lucky in having the place. I'm engaged on, perhaps, too many things just now.

1. Completing the 'Dummy' of my second book to forward to Angus & Robertson.
2. Completing design for a bungalow at Olinda.
3. Working on canvases for an Exh. to take place at Gill's (100 Exhibition St.) end of March—27th.
4. Looking after my 'observatory'—and other things.

FINEST OUTLOOK IN ALL MELBOURNE

I will advise you when I get a chance of getting to see you at your place. Am keen to see your garden, too—it's the one special delight of a country life. I hope that you may both be able to go to view my Exhn., 27th Mch. I shall show my own portrait (for Sydney Gallery), and also one of my wife I painted in London.

I wonder how your painting progresses. I expect the garden absorbs a lot of time just now.

All kind thoughts to Mrs. T.R. and you.

Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STREETON  
(Smike)."

"18 Feb., 1924.

My dear Bulldog,

I got your note of 8th Feb., and shall call in at 'St. Neots' for the others, tho' I have written you since then.

It is now 10.30 p.m., and here I am 57 years of age, and feeling as free and independent as though I were 20 again. 3 feet in front of me a piece of plate glass 11 feet by 4 ft 10 inches; it overlooks a dark mass, the Botanic Gardens—the lights from Corio Bay, Williamstown, Pt. Melbourne, and the City and two or three windows of Government House. Against the cool darkness of my window are spread the exquisite wings of about 30 moths of all sizes, attracted by the light of my 'observatory'—much as they would against the glass of a lighthouse. Talk about freedom. Here I am with the *finest outlook in all Melbourne*. I make my own cup of tea at 7 a.m. and walk round in dressing gown admiring the views. I can make my breakfast, wash up, and make my bed all within 45 minutes. It all makes me think of an illustrated drawing in *Punch*, the mistress hiring a new maid (or trying to).

'And why did you leave your last place?'

'Please, M'm, they wanted to lead the sinful life, with no servants about.'

On Saturday, 16th, I went with bag down the Toorak Rd. and bought some lovely peaches. Painted a study of them during the afternoon that I could not have done 10 years ago. This afternoon I painted another of a pound of chops (add tomato sauce in a bottle), and feel quite conceited about it. I'm painting

some still life to make variety in my Exhn. opening end of March at Gill's Gallery, in Exhibition St. (I seem to be talking of nothing but my own doings, but I can't talk of yours till I get up to see you and yours.)

I seem to have been working at almost too many things lately, but I have at last posted up to Angus & Robertson (Sydney) the dummy of my second book. I'm editing it myself. I showed the manuscript to *Art in Australia* Editor, Ure Smith, and though he didn't refuse it, he wasn't enthusiastic in any way. I suppose because some of my articles were a contrast of opinion and judgment to the policy of the Society of Artists and as the S. of A. and *Art in Australia* are under one control I thought I'd go on my own once more.

The first book on my works contained 7,000 words by Julian Ashton, Konody and Lionel Lindsay. My second book has about 32,000 words, all my own. It deals with a longish record from Summers, Buvelot, Folingsby, yourself and others up to 1922:

The Pioneers.

The Achievement of Australians overseas.

The Effect of your contribution 'Impressionism.'

The 9 x 5.

The Result of the One-Man Shows.

Authorities and Various Influences and the Possibilities of Future Progress (16,000 words).

Also

16,000 (approximately) of 'Personal Narrative.'

Roll of Honour, supplementary to the one already published by *Art in Australia*, and Appendix, etc.

A Hell of a lot of work it means. But then there's nothing so interesting as work. I personally get tired out, and weary and old and bored, unless I'm working. And yet I'm not a consumptive subject. Witness consumptives, the great Keats, Beardsley and many others—they seem to work at high pressure, as in a fever to get it done in time.

The mention of Keats makes me think of yesterday at 'Coombe Cottage,' a charming lady there after her tennis sat next to me at tea, and she mentioned Keats' *Endymion*. By Jove, it was the one delight of the day—it seems years in Australia since I've heard anyone talk of Keats. This lady was Lady Bridges, of

ONE THOUSAND GUINEAS FOR "GOLDEN SUMMER"

Adelaide, a delightful woman. Dear old Melba is a generous soul and a fine singer, and so kind, but I think she's almost as simple, and as easily imposed upon as a child, and yet one can't do anything.

I got Annear to produce a plan for Olinda, a log cabin (of the saplings on the property). It apparently would cost twice as much as the regular 'shack' which I must be contented with. So I've designed one myself, and the builder-contractor thinks it's quite workable. I hope to have it up very soon.

Lord! How I miss my wife and Boy! as soon as my work is over for the day. As soon as I feel sure of enough for my Exhn. I'll get up to your place, and we'll have a good old yarn, and see your garden. I'm *longing for one*.

My kindest regards to Mrs. T.R.

Yours (Smike),  
ARTHUR STREETON."

Streeton had a show at the Fine Art Society's Gallery, which was opened by Dame Nellie Melba on 25th March, 1924. By 11 a.m. the next day he had sold over £1700 worth. This included the *Golden Summer* (1000 guineas). The catalogue listed 38 pictures, three of them lent by Melba.

In the copy of this catalogue now before me (it came, like these letters, from the Tom Roberts' estate) is a loose sheet containing part of a critique, apparently of this show, written by M. J. MacNally, then critic for the *Age* newspaper. Seemingly, it had formed portion of a letter addressed to Tom Roberts, who had written in the margin, "What does he want!!" It is not clear that Streeton ever saw this; the catalogue it was in was T.R.'s own copy. It may be significant, however, that, in the letter which follows, Streeton feels it necessary to apologise for the "business puffs" which take up three of the five pages of his catalogue. Here are MacNally's comments—there is no formal beginning:

"without bias or venom, a criticism. It did not meet with the Editor's approval. What he objected to was my remark that 'Streeton's art, instead of its old-time dignity of a quiet handicraft, now echoed with the boom and bustle of arrogant commercialism,' and I think this is so—I'm sorry, but it's my honest opinion. The technique, the drawing, the colour, the composi-



SMIKE TO BULLDOG

tion and selection are there in their glory, but the INTENTION has all the blatancy of a Commercial Traveller. Streeton has acquired a sordid outlook that is very unpleasant and which I regret to say is causing some caustic comment from people that really know and matter.

Always your sincere admirer and friend,

M. J. MACNALLY."

Streeton reported the joyous news of the record sale.

"7 Fairlie House,  
Anderson Street,  
South Yarra.  
26.3.1924.

My dear Bulldog,

Glad to have your letter the other day. I've been busy on my Exhibition work, or would have written earlier.

My Show of 35 works opened yesterday, and (considering the stringency in the money market) it began quite well in a business way. I feel sure that you would like to know that the old canvas, *Golden Summer*, sold yesterday for one thousand guineas (60 x 30). Spencer wanted it for the Gallery but pooh-pooed the price.

I well remember one warm evening at the old house, Eaglemont, that I had got out a knife in order to scrape off a lot of the thick paint from the picture: because I had heard it was done at the National Gallery and was a good thing. You looked at *Golden Summer* and observed, 'leave it alone, don't scrape it down, etc.'—and fortunately I took your good advice.

I do hope that when you next come to town you will advise me at this address and I shall be glad *any day* you mention, and we can meet and lunch and talk. Any day except Sat. or Sunday, for then I'm busy at Olinda, where my house has now begun, and as soon as chance occurs I want to come and see your place.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR STREETON  
(Smike).

P.S. Please forgive the business puffs in my catalogue, but exhibiting pictures is also a business proceeding.

A.S."

PRAISE FOR ROBERTS' PORTRAIT

A few weeks later he is enthusiastic about T.R.'s portrait of Professor Laurie and suggests that the Bulldog should be placed in charge of the National Gallery school.

"7 Fairlie House,  
Anderson Street,  
South Yarra.

15 April, 1924.

My dear Bulldog,

I saw your portrait at Gill's yesterday. By Jove! *It's splendid*—a great achievement (and I feel so ashamed now of *my* poor old fat head of a portrait larger than life size). I really was so delighted and it held me for a long time. I haven't seen your Laurie portrait for years, but I always thought of it as one of your best, but I think that this one leaves it a good way behind. At first sight it looked more solid and has fine character and reserve quality. It will make them 'sit up.'

Why aren't you in charge at the Painting School? When one reflects on the heads by Bernard Hall, and on Julian Ashton, 'the father of Australian Art,' etc. (that's the *Sydney* propaganda, but it's temporary).

Your lovely canvas will go up to Sydney with my sad effort, but I must try another. I have your letter for de Steiger, and he'll get it when he calls for two panels he brought me for signature. One is of 'Brander's Ferry,' painted in 1884, 40 years ago, *if you please*.

Re the house, the foundations are well laid, drainpipes filled with cement, with a bolt in cement passing up through the hardwood and a nut screwed down on top just in case of white ants.

Last Saturday, I planted, myself, 24 West Australian gums, 'Ficifolia' and 'Calophylla'—also some *Boronia*—and next day, after the night's rain, every one looked its best, a bit of luck.

I go to-morrow to stay near Beaufort, at 'Trawalla,' and the following week-end I go up to plant some more gums, 'Macropcarpa' and some Scotch heather, and *Ericas*. But it's exhausting work for one who is not in form.

How nice to hear from old Duncan Anderson again. I missed him in Sydney—and from *Barnett* also. Heavens, what a constitution he must have had to have lasted so—it's extraordinary.

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

The Book? Angus & Robertson tell me that the demand for large Art Books has petered out entirely. (I think that *Art in Australia* have overdone the business, and not kept up the original good standard.) But there's a Melbourne man wants to see my 'book,' and I'm going to show it to him.

All kind messages to Mrs. T.R. and you.

Yours sincerely,

(Smike)

ARTHUR STREETON.

P.S. *Hearty Congratulations.*"

Streeton's remark is hardly fair to the publishers of *Art in Australia*. Many notable art books of high quality followed this period—for example, *The Art of George Lambert, A.R.A.*, *The Art of Elioth Gruner*, and the *Margaret Preston Portfolio*.

He took a trip up the east coast of Australia in the winter of the same year and duly reported to T.R.

"Townsville,  
Queensland.

13 Aug., 1924.

My dear Bulldog,

Your letter of 30 July came to me yesterday, and was very, very welcome. I had just returned by launch from Magnetic Island, where I spent 3 or 4 days. I slept in a hut (near the landing stage) called 'Arcadia'—and, though 'tis midwinter, found it very warm except in the shade of Cocoa-nut, Tamarind, and Mango trees. I've been up and around Cairns and the hill formation everywhere is very beautiful. But the tropics (for its Latitude is 17) I don't feel very keen upon painting, and especially as wherever I go I must be with the tourists, very nice folk, too, but it makes any work more difficult, and most of the attractive hill subjects one only sees *passing* in train or steamer. I must say that Howard Smith Ltd. and the A.U.S.N. Coy. have been most kind. Howard Smith gave me the Doctor's room to myself coming up on 'Canberra'—also an unusual ticket, by which I may travel on any of their steamers or those of A.U.S.N. up and down the coast *as often and when* I please till end of December. I may return here next winter. Meanwhile I return by 'Levuka' to-morrow for Melbourne. I can produce

more down in Melb. and Sydney for my Exh. in November, also there's the house to look at, and my wife and son arriving, perhaps, in Oct. or November.

No. I did not go to Adelaide, though some of my own works went over on my own terms.

It's jolly to read your letter from Sassafras up here, and Mr. Clarke—he didn't sell me any land. He offered me certain  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre blocks at high prices, and the 4 acre block I liked he couldn't give me a price for—holding it for a rise, I suppose. That's nearly 3 years ago, and it's still unsold. No. I bought my 5 acres from Mr. Dowling, no agents—and got it for £140 an acre, and now adjoining land in small blocks is priced about £600 per acre *by the Agents*.

I suppose it's Clarke's son, Gordon, a ginger haired chap, a fine looking boy, who built your studio. I feel very fortunate so far in Dick Hall, who is now finishing my house. He's a soldier, works hard, and all the work he puts in looks most satisfactory. I'd certainly recommend him to any of my friends. And the garden and the trees, what a delight it is. All through the winter I've put in my week-ends up there, old clothes, boots and leggings from the Somme, working at the bramble and bracken—burning off—and planting no end of trees. The little blackwoods are most interesting, and I have quite a crop, now that the cattle can't get in, and also about 10 large ones, about 2 feet in diameter. I wonder if you put in any flowering gums from W.A. I've put in quite a varied lot, and all seem doing well, also 50 Lambertiana Cypress for a break-wind and to screen us from Dowling's house. Acacia *Elata* is a fine one. I'm impatient to get back to Olinda and have another look at things and I think my wife and boy will be very pleased with it.

And you're expecting your big son out and his family. That's splendid.

We feel a little sad at cutting away, so to speak, from dear old Britain. Britain, the country that's paying for the war, for next 30 years, I suppose. She is the keystone of the world to-day. I think civilization depends upon her more than any other country. The British as a race never know when they are beaten—and their great grit usually wins through.

Life here is sunny and comparatively easy, the lovely climate, etc. We are personally very well off. But one will miss many

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

stimulating things that exist over in Great Britain.

As soon as I can I want to come and see your place and then bring you up to see mine and we can have another good old talk over everything.

I hope to get to Fairlie House in 7 or 8 days.

Meanwhile, my best regards to Mrs. T.R. and you.

Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STREETON.  
(Smike)."

Incidental in the next is the resurrection to memory of the ambitious Australian Institute of the Arts and Literature (long since dead) which was the brain child of the late E. A. Vidler.

"7 Fairlie House,  
Anderson Street,  
South Yarra.  
18.11.1924.

My dear Bulldog,

I look forward to the arrival by S.S. 'Nestor' on Sunday of my family. I am still undoing hundreds of packages and the job is the division of our household effects into two sections, one for my 'Observatory' here and one for Olinda. It's always a one-man job somehow, and working day and night is exhausting. I am also preparing to 'lecture,' if you please, with 60 lantern slides of the Masters, at Queen's Hall, Collins St., on Thursday, the 20th Nov., at 8 p.m., before the 'Australian Institute of Arts and Literature.' The Secty., Mr. Vidler, has desired me to invite any friends I choose, so if you *happen* to be in town, there you are!

But I long to take my wife and son up to Olinda. House is finished and engine and battery are being installed for light.

Hoping you are both well and with kindest remembrances to Mrs. T.R.

Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STREETON  
(Smike)."

A fragment exists of a note written at the Olinda home ("Longacres") on 21/12/26, in which is a delightful reminisc-

CONDER EXHIBITION IN SYDNEY

ence of the first camp at Houston's farm, Box Hill, with "the Prof. sitting cross-legged like a Turk, with handkerchief over his head, rolling a cigarette, and in his excitement . . ." but that is the end of it.

Streeton was a great lover of nature. Telling of the purchase of his house in Grange Road, Toorak, he rejoices over the trees growing in the grounds. Later one finds him taking a leading part in the agitation to induce the State Government to reserve for posterity a portion of the Cumberland forest, in the ranges beyond Marysville, where there still stand some of the greatest trees (*Eucalyptus regnans*) in the world, challenging the giant redwoods of California.

"7 Fairlie House,  
Anderson Street,  
S. Yarra.

30.7.1927.

My dear Bulldog,

I was glad to get your note, 28th inst., and I am sorry I've not seen more of *you*. I go up to Olinda at irregular times and my wife and I only returned from there 2 days ago; and as the lease of *this* place terminates in November, I have bought an old house and grounds at Toorak, corner of Grange Rd. and Douglas St., 150 feet to Grange Rd. and 165 to Douglas St. A good deal of rebuilding and renovation are necessary, because house was built 75 years ago. But it has a bit of lawn, an *old* Oak and a smaller Oak, a very old Olive, a fine Elm, Mulberry, Arbutus, and other trees. So we look forward to going in there in 3 or 4 months' time; and already I have put in a dozen new roses—standards and climbers.

Hordern's Gallery (Sydney) have now opened an Exhn. of dear old K.'s work (Charles Conder). I'm trying to find out how the pictures came out; the entire collection was produced after he left Australia . . . and they are priced at about £782.

121 works, including:

35 lithographs

30 Pastels and Drawings

26 W. Colours, etc.

33 Oil Paintings

I find that planting out hundreds of deciduous trees and conifers is most fascinating, and the care of roses and other

SMIKE TO BULLDOG

climbers, clovers, instead of Yorkshire Fog, takes up a lot of time and energy very pleasantly; and our new (old) place at Toorak will take up still more time and energy.

Our best wishes to you and Mrs. T.R.

Yours,

SMIKE.

P.S. I wish we could meet oftener; will you telephone first thing when you are next coming to town, and come and lunch with us, or with me in town.

A.S."

He became art critic of the *Argus* in 1929. Tom Roberts was apparently in Tasmania when the next letter was sent.

"17 Grange Rd.,  
Toorak,  
Melbourne, S.E.2.  
19 Feb., 1930.

My dear Bulldog,

I got your second letter of 12th Feb. and am sorry I had not written on receipt of the 1st one.

I am very glad to hear you have been working so hard, and it must be lovely down there. I had intended to go to Tasmania this summer, but could not get away; seem to have too many things to do this year and have been unwell for the past 6 weeks, and yet have to stick to it, for my Exhibition opens at Gill's Gallery about 3rd March, and another (small one also) in Sydney during April. I write to you lying on a couch here, as I'm tired, but will try to write clearly. Fact is, I've been doing too much gardening and other things, and yet the gardening is so attractive and so urgent if you don't want the garden to go to ruin, and I have *two*, and all the hundreds of trees I've planted at 'Longacres,' and all the flowers, and I am familiar with every foot of my 6 acres, and then here it's half an acre to keep clean and all the roses I've put in to be watered and cared for. I have a man every week for  $\frac{1}{2}$  a day.

Last time I went to Olinda I harvested the Lavender blooms. I have 3 kinds, the French, the perfume not so precious as the Long Spike or Mitcham Lavender, and then there's the Chinese kind, very pretty. I gathered all the Mitcham, and it's drying

out in the house here, and then I rub off the dried buds and flowers and store it away in large pots for my wife, who is so fond of it, and its fragrance is through all the rooms of this dear old house. And then I have 3 dogs, which are nice company, and I have to keep an eye on their needs. And then I'm still having colour blocks made to illustrate my Catalogue, and there's always difficulty in getting the colour block etchers to do things well enough. There's no end to the jobs.

And yet there's nothing more awful than not working—to have to *fill* in time must be very dreary, and after 60 years of age there seems such a lot one would like to do, and the years spin round at such a pace, and when it's all over only 2 things left—the promise of eternal life and happiness or the threat of Hell for ever and ever, amen: a ghastly monotony either way. I'd like to come back and haunt my Blackwood trees and scare the life out of anyone who cuts down any of the trees I've planted. I'd have a special outfit in phosphorescent 'bullroarers.' This is rather like too much looking ahead. I'm so wrapped up in my two places and my works that I hardly ever see any artists, which, I suppose, is bad and selfish of one. Must try and get down and do painting about Hobart in the Autumn, if it is not then too late. Does Mt. Wellington get all hidden in cloud by April or May, I wonder?

We are still trying to persuade the Government to retain 5 square miles of Cumberland forest. I hope it comes off, because except for the Sequoias, of California, the tallest and largest living things on the Earth's surface are in the Cumberland Valley.

My wife and son are enjoying England and London and Bath and Glastonbury, St. Albans, and other lovely places. Oliver, 18, sat at Cambridge for a possible scholarship (Science), but as there were only 30 scholarships and 400 competitors from various parts of the world, he did not get one, and, I think, was very disappointed; but he is young, and I know is a very good worker, and I'm quite content, and he's very good and thoughtful for his mother, who, I hope, will return within the year, and will stay for his science course. I've missed them very much.

I sometimes think of the old days of the Don and Prof. McCubbin: both men who needed caring for—all very sad.



SMIKE TO BULLDOG

'K.' so brilliant and charming, but must have his excesses, and was careless of himself.

Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STREETON  
(Smike).

P.S. Re Art notices in *Argus*: I gave it up for a season, because of the need for my own painting, and the Exhibition season was over. But I shall begin again as the shows come on. What I like best is doing the 'occasional articles.' You didn't see my one on 'Roses,' I suppose.

A.S.

Another P.S.

I quite forgot to say that we've had a heat wave for past 2 weeks, rising to 103° and 104°—which rather aggravated my feeling of being very off colour, etc. And it makes me wonder how I managed when painting the Hawkesbury River canvas, for it was 106°, and on the *first days* of painting 108° in the shade—wish I could stand the heat as well now.

A.S."

In a note from the war front in France in 1918 Streeton had remarked that he had not been in the air yet, but hoped soon to have a flight. As a matter of history, he was to wait over twenty years for that experience. Just a year or two before his death he flew with another well-known artist, Harold B. Herbert, from Melbourne to Tasmania, a flight which he stated was his first. He enjoyed it. Almost as soon as they were settled in the 'plane and flying over the picturesque coast he began to use his sketch book. His friend, Herbert, tells a good story of this excursion. Sir Arthur's canvases, being large, were consigned by boat. They were insured for £3/10/0. Returning, the artist-owner asked for a cover of £1,000. The clerk, with the previous documents before him, was astonished. "These canvases were only valued at £3/10/0 when you were coming over," he exclaimed. "*But I've painted on them since,*" was the artist's impressive retort.

The final note in this collection from Smike to the Bulldog is dated 27th May, 1930, just a renewed invitation to visit Longacres. Tom Roberts died in September of the following year; Arthur Streeton was to live 12 years longer.

LETTERS FROM  
CHARLES CONDER  
TO TOM ROBERTS

## CHARLES CONDER

Some additional letters addressed to Tom Roberts have been found amongst his effects since this book was prepared. The most interesting are from Charles Conder, who earned international fame as an artist when he went abroad. His first contribution (only one page remains) is undated and without heading; it was undoubtedly written at the Eaglemont camp at Heidelberg, the year approximately 1890. Roberts may have been away on one of his painting trips to New South Wales or Tasmania. "Sonny" Pole was a fellow artist, to whom references will be found earlier in the book.

"quite what to do but trust in Providence that something will turn up, so that I may get away in a few months. I fancy, somehow, I shall always have a near place in my heart for Australia after the last week, when everything has looked so fine and I so well. A long day's painting and then tea and tin whistle. A poem in a line. Pole is getting quite a dab on the whistle, and old Smike and I lie down and listen to him on Sunday evenings and occasionally when anything familiar takes place join in very much out of tune. Heidelberg is doing him a lot of good, and I like him there very much. He is awfully young in some ways, and I fancied sometimes that a little too much 'Golden Summer,' as he calls wine, was not improving him, but at Heidelberg everything is different.

Sincerely yours,

CHARLES CONDER."

Conder left Australia in 1890 to try his luck in France. The next letter was written when actually on the way. A pencil sketch on the final page is presumably a self portrait. He is holding on to the ship's rail, obviously in pensive mood. Beneath is written, "I like the ocean in a Calm."

"Austral,"  
Albany.

2 May, 1890.

Dear Tom,

I was very glad to get your letter, so full of kind wishes for

my welfare, etc. I had often heard of your pilgrimage to Tasmania, that mysterious disappearance of the 'Bulldog' from his friends—so sudden and unexpected—but everyone assured me that this was a practice of yours and that I wasn't to be surprised at anything.

I am sorry I went without saying good-bye, but I feel sure that I shall see you in Paris one of these days—you are such a roving spirit. I missed you very much at the dinner, which was a great success albeit that I felt very crushed sometimes, as nearly all the speakers thought it worth while to touch on my imitation of Streton. I feel a good deal of truth about this, but if they'd then said Roberts they might have been nearer the mark—for if there is any distinct school in Melbourne, I won't say Sydney, it's *entirely* due to you. The fellows missed you and your work very much at the exhibition, and little Paterson seemed particularly aggrieved and seemed to think you meant to insult the society by not exhibiting.

I think you have a 'strong pair' in the Harrisons. You know Mrs. Harrison had a very good position in the exhibition, and I saw some impressions by her husband after your own heart.

I mean to work hard in Paris and do something, but I feel very doubtful about myself sometimes and fancy I have no originality at all. However . . .

I hope you will follow your idea of doing something in Tasmania, and then come back fresh to finish your sheep shearing picture.

You might send me a letter to Buxton Knight, if you don't mind. Mac has given me a letter to Bates, and I shall tell him the news about you and what a lazy fellow you are getting.

With all good wishes, old man, I am your sincere friend,

CHARLES CONDER.

My Paris address is :

M. PABLO GIL,  
6 Bould des Capucines,  
Paris."

He has arrived, and here are the first impressions of studio life in Paris, which he has sent to his Bulldog friend :

“13 Rue Ravignan,  
Montmartre,  
Paris.

August the 20th, 1890.

Dear Tom,

Most of my letters seem to begin in the same way. I mean with an apology for not writing before, and so must this one—how otherwise? Here are three months in blessed Europe and no letter to one of my best friends. How fares it with thee? ‘I—know—nothing,’ to use one of your own phrases. Longstaff the other day showed me a copy of the *Argus*—the Melbourne Art Review, he tells me—in which the realistic efforts of Mr. Tom Roberts with reference to a Shearing were discouraged and more sentimental themes desired by the high-souled critic. When will the irrepressible Mr. J.S. be gathered to his fathers—when it’s not impressionism it’s some other dam ‘ism.’ Well, Tom, I weep with you.

I had a very nice letter from Smike a few weeks back which made me as pleased as possible for some days—it was just like the dear boy talking to me, and brought back the best memories of the first months in the year—pink nights after hot days. I feel more than sorry that these days are over, because nothing can exceed the pleasures of that last summer, when I fancy all of us lost the ‘Ego’ somewhat of our natures in looking at what was Nature’s best art and ideality. Give me one summer again with yourself and Streeton—the same long evenings, songs, dirty plates, and last pink skies. But these things don’t happen, do they? And what’s gone is over.

Talking of those effects, you ask—in the letter you sent from Tasmania—me to tell you if the same skies are here in Paris. Well, not the same quite, but very similar; more so, strange to say, than any I saw on shipboard or in Italy or any of the other places I stopped at.

I should like to work very much in Ceylon, which charmed me very much—the little I saw of it. It would suit you to paint in, I feel sure, and I wanted you muchly at the time to enjoy the sun with me and have a sympathetic gloat—in that city of Arabian Nights—Colombo. I did a sketch in Colombo of a street scene, but it hangs by me here in the studio—it’s not very strong, but it brings back the theme—and, oh, my com-

mercial soul, couldn't the three of us turn a good 9 x 5 show out of Ceylon.

I fell in love quite as much, I think, with the Neapolitan life and color and enjoyed the Bay of Naples over Chianti wine and the guitars, which seem so popular there. I shall never forget one Sunday afternoon, a perfect day, giving two Olivey Italians two francs for half an hour's music on their mandolin and guitar. It was a veritable dream to look on that blue sea and rose green hill land by Vesuvius and have 'Faust' divinely expressed to give that touch of sentiment to the whole. I never, somehow, expect things to have much romance, even in the most romantic surroundings, but that had, strange to say. It was a chapter from 'Ariadne,' for the boy was beautiful and had a lovely voice—but away, oh, Sentiment.

I stayed three days in Naples, and went on to Rome, where I stayed two, I think. I liked Florence immensely, and Browning's 'old pictures in Florence' helped me very much in the Uffizi Gallery, and the other galleries that I visited. What a wonderful place Florence is, to be sure; it laughs at Time, when other places seem to crumble, it reeks of age and the things that stay. Howells is too 19th century for it—the background he made of it for his charming American seems all very well, but it was a background, after all. It seems strange to use Florence in that light—if you follow me, do you? I mean that you are a cipher in Florence; your individuality is nowhere—the 15th century, and not the 19th, is everywhere. I was sad at leaving it, but the money ran out.

I spent a month or six weeks in England—I forget which—mostly with relatives, and was precious short of cash, and so I had no opportunity of spending much time in London or of presenting the letters that I had. I scarcely had the time I should have wished, though my friends were most hospitable and kind, for I was dying for a week in London among the boys—but it didn't come.

Here in Paris I am working pretty hard and trying to improve myself on drawing, etc. I am at present only working half a day at the schools—a day was too much for me. The other half I spend in the studio at a head, when I can afford a model—or still life—but oftener in the galleries.

I expect I should be demoralized altogether if I had much

money, for the Parisian ladies offer much attraction to the amative K. I haven't made many friends at Paris at present, for most of the strongest men are away in the country and the residue as far as I can see is decidedly commonplace—and more dissipated than myself. Still, a few of them are good workers at the school and try to help me with their advice and help.

I have great difficulty in living on my £120 a year, because I'm such a bad manager; but I have had much expense in getting a studio which is rather large and making it comfortable enough to live in. I was nearly some weeks back having a wife *pro tem* to look after it for me and take the cooking off my hands, but have since thought better of it.

Well, I hope you'll come over, for it's a lovely place, and bring Smike with you.

Affectionately,  
CHARLES CONDER."

He gives the year of this letter as 1890; obviously it was 1891. A wonderful Chat Noir decorates the letter, perched high and silhouetted against a background of Parisians and quaint figures.

"13 Rue Ravignan,  
Montmartre, Paris.  
7 Feb., 1890.

Dear Tom,

I felt so much this evening that strange visitant a letter which strikes us as it were of a sudden and find ourselves talking again to the friend or his letter, prolonged conversation somewhat, for, perhaps, we have talked to the letter before if we liked and kept it. So this evening, searching my trunk for a color bill to check, I find the last epistle of one Tom Roberts—written from Tasmania to one on a journey—charming and so like him, a little ironical, perhaps, on one passage where he joins forgetfulness and greatness. But blow prosing—why don't you write; what have I done, or are you merely too lazy to remember old friends?

Well, the sermon's off my mind; now what can I write about, for I wrote Streeton only last week. I'm as tired as possible—have been to two new exhibitions to-day—Aquarellists and Merlitons—the latter was too crowded to see much. There

didn't seem much very interesting at either. Besnard had fine things at both, and Olivier Merson a very fine picture of the Annunciation. Boutet de Monvel had some charming water colors like little Holbeins. Very few of the other pictures were artistic, though many seemed very well drawn and painted. Doucet, Bonnet, Carolus-Duran, Lefebvre, Cormon, Delaunay, Maignan, Flameng, and many great men were represented, but these exhibitions seem to be regarded as rather failures; the strongest of the young painters seem to feel the light more than these men, and so don't, perhaps, feel opposite work. I feel Besnard's intensity in this particular, and, indeed, he has been an idol here for some time. Puvis de Chavannes is great, great. I remember, you used to admire him so much.

Streton writes the most charming letters, and tells me about your doings a little. Sorry the sale was no go. I'm awfully glad you sold the *Sheep Shearing*. I am working at Cormon's and a little in the studio, but my picture doesn't go very well at present, and my friends say that they thought I could do better. Next week is the 'Mardi Gras,' and Paris is looking most brilliant, and one sees the most striking effects of beef in the butchers' shops. My friends are counting on my attendance at their orgies, but I am not one of them this time. In truth, I am stale, stale as my letter shows, and, alas, my picture—and besides my purse. The Julien ball is next Saturday, but I don't think I shall go. I have no girl to take, you see, and it's a necessary adjunct. I've tried the feminines, but—I know, alas, I'm better alone.

K."

A week later he has a dream, in which he is back at the old Heidelberg camp and the Bulldog is rousing Smike and himself in the early morning. "How I miss dear old Heidelberg," and in a neat little drawing he pictures the next meeting of three companions as winged beings, each standing before an easel, painting the constellations. George Frederick Folingsby, whose death is referred to, died on January 4, 1891. He was Director of the National Gallery of Victoria.

"Rue Ravignan.

Feb. 13 (1891), 11 p.m.

Let me see, it's about 7 o'clock at Heidelberg. Bulldog has just woke up and is disgusted that Smike should still be in the land



of dreams. SMIKE!!! Hullo, Bulldog! The last was necessarily low and feeble, the blanket intervened. And Poor Poor K. thinks how much he'd like to be there in his honest little bunk so neat and orderly (without being prim, of course). How I miss dear old Heidelberg, to be sure. I hope you fellows are all right and painting good pictures. We'll be together painting again some day, I hope, though I don't suppose at Heidelberg. These things never happen, you know.

The 'Mardi Gras' is just now on. This year it has been well kept up. The procession was most amusing. Goulue dancing on the top of a triumphal car, the can can most effective. I had quite a good evening. Some French fellows asked me up to dinner, and afterwards we went to the Moulin de la Galette, which is not a hundred yards from my studio. You remember the old mill, I expect. I saw quite a number of curious costumes and ladies and gentlemen of a dangerous type. Most interesting for once these well-known characters, as it were, at home.

Afterwards we went to the Moulin Rouge, where things were quite elegant, and the dresses most charming. We stayed there till three and then went to supper—quite a jolly night.

I suppose you have heard of poor Walton's death. I heard quite accidentally the other day. Poor fellow; the English winter was too much for him. I saw him last June at the R.A., and he seemed much better. I heard to-day also of Folingsby's death. By Jove, lots of good men are dying. I was at Meissonier's funeral the other day with some of the boys; a most impressive affair. Chaplin dead, too.

Love to SMIKE and yourself.

CHARLES CONDER."

A lengthy postscript (12 pages) follows. It is interesting to read the impressions made on this fresh young mind (Conder was no more than 23) by such a disturbing influence in the world of art as Whistler, just then at the height of his career. He had published his famous book not long before—with waspish wit he called it *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies as Pleasingly Exemplified in Many Instances Wherein the Serious Ones of This Earth, Carefully Exasperated, Have Been Prettily Spurred On to Unseemliness and Indiscretion While Overcome by an Undue Sense of Right.*

“In the Studio.

It isn't pleasant sometimes to read the letter commenced two nights ago, and one often disclaims any of its assertions uttered with so much conviction; still, if it is not so lucid or sage as it might be, what matter, for have I claim to any of the above? Do you remember Whistler's portrait of 'Miss Corder'? It seems to share honors with Puvis, etc., this year; it is a great picture, and it is almost more than anyone expected that Whistler should step into this rank of art and take leadership so easily. I am not taking any one-sided view in thus looking at his success, for I am echoing two very good men I sometimes meet at dinner—Friant and Picard—who gave it as their opinion. It ranks as one of the very greatest portraits, I'm sure. Some of my friends (the younger men) seemed inclined to prefer a man named Gandara, who follows Whistler very closely, but that *was the first day*. Puvis is great, great, great, and makes great pleasure. You mention Dagnan's *Pain Benit* of the Luxembourg; since he painted that he seems to have changed—I believe myself much for the better. For instance, he is so much less realistic at present, which disappoints many men (the less serious ones). I have no gift of lucidity, especially this morning, but, believe me, he has arrived at being a very great man. His late work seems a trifle influenced by Leonardo, from its intensity, and he shows in it all a slight disregard for those things he seems to have been celebrated for, the actual—but generally here he is regarded as a man that's fast declining in his art; though men, I fancy, who think more, view the matter in quite a different light. Except in one or two of the old masters, I never saw a head like one exhibited at the Volny two months back. One of the coming men seems to be Picard; he exhibits at the Champs de Mars this year several portraits of women. I will try and get you a good print of his work if possible, especially one that I feel sure will please you. Picard is another remarkable change in one year; last Salon (Champs de Mars) he won a purse on some very realistic matter-of-fact portraits; this year, after some months in Florence, he gets into the spiritual side more, though never on literary ground. Botticelli he believes in.

Claude Monet seems to have made a great stride this year, and won over the Philistines. I only wish you could have seen some of his landscapes; *they lived*, and he does them in the

funniest way. He paints a good deal still with pure colour, but you quite lose the paint at three or four yards (less). He takes you among hayricks and sunsets in a most natural way and then lets you see it as you have been used—not in his, but in your own way. I feel Monet in this way or not at all. He is without bias, and scoffs at poetry, takes no interest in pictures, boasts, I believe, of never having seen a Salon—probably a consummate poser, as only Frenchmen can be—but, after all, they say (and I, too—modest little K.) the greatest landscapist in his way.

Cazin is fine this year, but it would be absurd to compare his work with Monet's. Enough of pictures; my criticism isn't worth a damn, after all.

I am happy here in my friends, two Frenchmen—Salle and Lomont. They both do very good work. Salle has a lovely study this year at the New Salon of a nude girl, seen with new eyes almost. With Haumont I am as friendly as ever, though I see less of him, for he has taken to his bosom a woman, and, being of an amorous nature, neglects his friends in consequence. As far as men go who are high in art, through being so much among the French, I meet often men whom they speak of as arrived and with whom one's vanity encourages one to talk; but, after all, it's better to study their pictures, for it's no easy matter to really know people in an intimate way in such large cities, however unassuming and friendly they appear. Some time ago little K. had a chance of visiting great Dagnan, but declined on grounds of shyness. One of my friends had told me this story. His name is Royer, and he was taken by Friant to see Dagnan's picture of the Conscripts. He says that Dagnan's manner was quiet and most unassuming, and as Royer was leaving Dagnan earnestly and with almost tears in the eyes says, 'But, M. Royer, do tell me if my picture is good.' I can't tell you this in the same way that it was told me, but it sounded most funny and almost put on, which I feel at the same time it wasn't in the least.

In the Studio, Thursday 26 or thereabouts.

I take up your letter again after two more days. Since last writing the *recompenses* of the Salon have been published, and I am glad to say that Longstaff has a mention, which news will reach you before the letter. He was here yesterday and seemed

very pleased about it. Longstaff is a nice fellow and I'm glad of his success. I feel little enough sympathy with him on art matters. He likes *painting* more than I (you see, I don't mind even the chance of being classed conceited by you, Tom, because you and I are old friends, and as far as the above is concerned it will remain with us).

You ask my opinion on a difficult question—"If strangers remain themselves here." An amusing reflection, a play of words, comes to my head on this—"If strangers *themselves* remain themselves," the last happens often enough. No. Some clever Frenchman gets the original creature with his accomplished technique, so do the strangers help the French—The Norwegians—but this doesn't answer your question—hard enough, and, perhaps, impossible. In my own case (one knows this best), I feel, as far as painting is concerned, I have remained myself without any temptation to follow others. Not because I fancy my work so much, but because it would puzzle one to amalgamate a dozen he likes equally and who work in opposite directions. I believe with most strangers over a certain age that they recognise the necessity of being themselves, and so go on the way they planned. With raw beginners, of course, they are influenced right and left.

Then another question in favor of oneself—you attract so much more attention if your work has some original quality which tempts you to go on.

I went round the Champs de Mars the other day with Altson. He seems very disappointed with the Salons—people usually are on arriving. I feel very little sympathy with him as of old. Streeton's picture, they say, looks very well in the Academy—nobody gladder than I."

This, the last of the series to carry a date, concludes Conder's first year in Paris. As usual, there is a sketch in it illustrating his thoughts or his surroundings. Casas was the friend Roberts made when travelling in Spain in 1883. An oil portrait of T.R. by Casas hangs, at time of this writing, in Roberts' old home, "Talisman," in the Dandenong Ranges of Victoria.

"13 Rue Ravignan, Montmartre.

22 May, 1891.

Dear Tom,

Much under the same difficulty I write you in this cafe, where

I come so often after dinner to talk bad French on subjects connected with Art and women. Dear me, how many wasted hours have I spent here. The jabber of my friends, the click of the billiards, the smell of heliotrope—all belong so much to the cafe, and will when it becomes a thing of the past. Often enough it's been dull here, and I have just looked over to the Moulin and persuaded my friends to go there for an hour and met their curses the next day. This letter would have commenced differently hadn't I dined, and here I am interrupted by 'Condane, vous avez vu cette petite blonde, etc.'

Well, Tom, old man, I was glad to get your letter, and hope I'm decent enough to answer it well, though it is after dinner. You see, I set you a good example, for I only received it this morning.

I am glad you are tranquille with your work; it's a tremendous thing for one—it doesn't do to get hot and cold too much. I am so glad you feel happy with your work, I say, and this will be half the battle to a man of your will and ability. The difficulties of sheep in motion must be tremendous and need a deuce of a lot of study and memory (wouldn't photographs help you somewhat? That's how the sheep and cattle painters work here, they say, but, after all, they show it a bit too much often). However, it doesn't matter much how it's done, does it?, so long as you get what's wanted.

The day won't be long off, I hope, when you will be here again with your equals in art, which must be pleasant for a painter. You and Smike. One of your friends, Casas, has a studio within a stone's throw of me at the Moulin de la Galette. He exhibits this year at the Champs de Mars some very good work, and is getting well known since last year. He works in a very grey way, a little lacking in color, I fancy, but very charming in tone and altogether most pleasing. Longstaff has a picture in the Old Salon, and it seems popular with most of the students at Cormon's. I think he may get a mention or medal on it. The Old Salon is very uninteresting, I think, and the New most charming. I find so much I like at the latter, and the Whistlers, Puvis de Chavannes, Dagnans, etc., most exciting, and make one want to work.

'La Goulue' danced well at the Moulin last night, and afterwards fought another dancer in the street. I didn't see the latter,

## CONDER'S SHORT LIFE

but the reporter of Gil Glas recounted it to me. La Goulue is very seductive and nice to look on and wears pantaloons of soft thin muslin when she struts her hour upon the boards. They say she is bad and dances the same nude at the Cafe American after 12 o'clock. I myself have been prone to admire her in a spiritual sense.

Dear old Smike seems sad, from his letter, and would do better here, I'm sure, as I believe you would if you only knew it and believed in Paris as does your loving

C. CONDER (with a small yellow beard like yours, only not so important)."

Conder's was a short life. He died in 1909. The letter which follows was written after 1901, for in it he refers to Roberts as engaged on the huge picture of the opening of the first Federal Parliament. (Why he calls the work a "big machine" is puzzling.) He evidently feared the English winter; although a London address is given, he was writing from the Continent and looking forward to return there in the spring.

"C/o Carfax & Co.,  
17 Ryder St.,  
St. James, S.W.

Dear Mr. Bulldog,

I was delighted to get your letter and the souvenirs brought back the memories of some very happy days. I remember them all so well and am more glad that I can say that you remember me.

I hope the big machine will be a success, but it must be an awful job to do. I should think 'Parliamentary Coves' are usually so beastly ugly. I met Maurice Grieffenhagen the other day in London, and we talked about you a lot, although I couldn't give him much news.

I am the same old K. as ever, and a perfect mountain of ups and downs. I am married and very happy, and you must pay us a visit when you come over. I am going to stay at a delightful seaside village in Normandy at the end of May and avoid London as much as possible. It is quite astonishing how very little of that beautiful town suffices to depress and bore me.

Your affectionate

K."

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