

From George F. Gray  
5, Curlewis Street  
Bondi, Sydney, N.S.W.  
AUSTRALIA

*Ed  
Personal - to  
Mrs Fletcher - to  
your souvenir of  
San Diego. Has not  
yet received one  
Geo*  
*Regards to  
Mrs Fletcher & Mr Matthews  
if he is still with  
you  
Geo*

Bondi, N.S.W.  
August 25th/28

Dear old friend Ed:

Your letter of July 18th, with all its interesting news, came to me as a delightful surprise. I got more satisfaction out of it than anything else that has reached me since I left old San Diego in 1921.

The first sentence in the third par. gave me more joy, Ed., old friend, than I can express in words. - "Things have gone along well with me". How I read this over and over, quoted it to my mate - for I have a real mate, just like you have, as I very happily remember. I said, always, that you would be rewarded finally and that you would enjoy well-earned prosperity after you had beaten down your enemies as I knew that you would.

In my hard and strenuous, though interesting life, I have no more glorious remembrances than those of the days when I was fighting alongside you for the things that we believed to be best. You was a glorious scrapper, Ed, and never knew how to be a pacifist or how to take the easiest road - but there was never an "easiest" road in yours and mine. I have the consciousness, and it is a "grand and glorious" feeling that you and I never mis-understood nor mistrusted each other - that, when I needed the best and most real help in advice and more than that, you alone, of all the best of my friends, in the fights, never failed me, and in return, old boy, I always hastened into the battle to be alongside you.

If now, as your letter tells me, the hardest of the scrapping is well over, and you are looking back, from smooth water, to the track of the many storms that you battled through, and as your letter also tells me, with a happy and healthy family around you and your mate, then there is no man on earth, that knows you, who glories in your success more than I do.

Judging by your photo, and by the story of your real endurance on the famous run from San Diego to Georgia, I should say that you have missed even the scars and wounds of battle, and emerged whole as well as victorious. Your appearance, as shown in the group, gives me the confident hope that the fearful accident, that made us all serious for you, in the long days of slow and painful recovery, has not damaged you as the most hopeful of us thought and feared that it might.

Please give Mrs. Fletcher the affectionate regards of Mrs. Gray and myself, and tell her how delighted we are for her happiness and yours in the health and prosperity of you both and of your family. We have never failed, when our hearts turned towards our San Diego and El Cajon, to think of and hope for you both and for yours.

(2)

you

I notice the magnitude of Ed. junior, and can imagine the glory of having a real bunch of manly sizeable men growing up around you as are approaching the time when you must hand over to younger heads and hands the burden that you have carried all the years - and, say, Ed, - how much easier is it for these youths of yours, with all the real advantages that have been given them, to start out, than it was for you back in January 1907, when I first met you, in the "Union" office. You were fighting half the world then and smiling through. You made a friend for life when you cheered this cub reporter by complimenting him on his manner of handling your "Trip through San Diego County".

This friendship of ours was born in the fighting line, and such friendships endure. To me, the fact that you won out and won out big, while many of the poor "coyotes" who fought you in the dark as well as in the open, when they could gang together, have worn out their fangs and their yelping gear and have now only the moon to moan at - is a matter of sincere joy. I should have stayed longer to help you, but the fates gave me another fight that I had to take on, all on my own, and I had to find a battle ground away from California. But it gave me my mate and we, finally, won out. You would be pleased if you could see the happy change in the lady you knew, in El Cajon, as Mrs. Annie Stansfield. Of our age - she looks as if she had hardly passed the 40 mark. I am always under the threatened penalty of instant annihilation if I ever slip and betray her age to the world. She is as sensitive about that as was our good old friend "King Edward" Gross.

Write to me, Ed., when you have a little time to spare, and tell me, please about Mr. Gross. Our little friend, Mrs. Johnston of El Cajon, has never missed a mail to Mrs. Gray since she left, in April, 1921, but we have never heard anything of Mr. Gross. We have followed your steps fairly well, because the little soul knew how much we thought of you and she did not miss much in newspaper extracts and otherwise that concerned you and your fight. We knew of your discovery of Europe, after we had been there, and we longed awfully for a chance to compare notes. I read the tribute of Mr. Claus Spreckels and marvelled. We heard and read of your final victory in the city of San Diego against the evil forces that always seemed to come back, like Mary Magdalene's devils - seven times as strong. We learned of your come-back from the anxious period following your accident.

Tell me too, please, about Harry Taylor, and just what happened after I left. Did he tire of my job, or did something better turn up. Marie Moore, my stenographer, who I commanded to stay by Harry and school him as I schooled her, is still at the State Labor Office. I tried to make a real office woman of her and succeeded. I had a long letter from her by the same mail that brought yours. She is still a faithful friend and likes to write me once in a while.

By the same mail, too, I had a letter from Jim Byers, whose deputy I was, for a long time, amongst other fighting honors. He says "I have often thought of you since you left San Diego". It is pretty nice, after seven years, to receive these evidences of lasting friendships.

Your stories of big doings in and around MY city of El Cajon, thrilled me with pleasure. It seems just yesterday, when I came to you to earnestly unfold my plans for the infant city. Your help, more than anything else, gave me success in that scrap. The young city was born in trouble and many "Herods" were always after "the young child's life." For years, I had to stand over it, like the archangel Michael - "with a drawn sword". But we pulled it through, and some day, it will be a real pride to its founders. But I am afraid that there will always be some stray barnacles or leeches in the way of complete progress, while men like Stell, Wilson Hall and C.O. Smith and others of their kind are still on deck. Often since I left old El Cajon, I have, after reading of various happenings in city life, ~~heard~~ heard the call to hurry back and extricate my city from their foul selfish hands, and start her again on the road to be something worth while. Now, when I see that you are doing so much for El Cajon, and I am not there to keep the track clear for you, as of yore, - well I have to quit thinking and step out and look at my native scenery, until I cool down again.

One day, in May, 1907, I first looked down on the town and valley of El Cajon, from the gap passing Grossmont, and that one vision gave me the ambition that fired me and held me through the years of fierce fighting and poverty, until the tide of battle turned for me, in 1913. Then, when I was able to sit at the council table of the little city, and control it, it was easy, and I was awful sorry when the time came to part.

In April 1921, I took my farewell look at the old fighting ground, and, when we drove slowly, in my little Overland, along the road that you say is now paved all the way from Villa Caro to El Cajon, I had to set my face hard and be a man. Every stick and stone on that road as far as the gap seemed to be trying to say "Good Bye" to me. But, after I had passed Grossmont, it was all over, and I took my medicine, until sundown, on the next day, when, at Needles, I passed out of California, when the spasm returned - for there is only one California.

The best that I can say, of any part of my native Australia that attracts me, is that it is every bit as good as California. If it is 'nt, I don't "choose" to be interested.

In 1922, on the Chateau Thierry battlefield, in France, I met an American tourist, the wife of a Los Angeles publisher, who knew San Diego and Coronado very well. She said that she had been around the world several times. I asked her if she had ever seen a city with so many real attractions as San Diego, and she said "No". But, on re-consideration she said - "Yes - Charleston, South Carolina". That same year, we came back to the U.S.A., and Mrs. Gray and I had a longing to see Charleston, S.C. We journeyed there and bought a business. We spent one winter there, and realized that Charleston, S.C. is as like San Diego, Cal. as a heaven could be like a hell.

In New Zealand, in 1903, I learned when working in a meat-packing works that a sheep that will not class with any other is a "One Only", and it was so labelled. San Diego is a "One Only" - alone in its kind.

I believe, that, here, in Australia, if nowhere else, San Diego has a duplicate, in climate and attractiveness, and that is Perth, Western Australia - in the same position, strange to say, as San Diego occupies on the map - in the extreme southwest corner, at the jumping-off place. Perth is right near the Indian Ocean, in the warm zone, with cool nights. At its back is a mountain range and, just over the range, begins the great Australian Desert - almost 2000 miles east and west by about 1500 north and south. This Australia is a trifle bigger than the mainland of U.S.A., but has only about six and a half million souls - about as many as New York City. It is only settled around the edge.

You may know that Hoover, who is, I hope, to be the next president, began his wonderful career (fresh from college, in California) on the great Australian Desert, about 400 miles east of Perth, as a mining engineer and financial adviser to Bewick-Moreing, the great English mining capitalists. You ought to have a special interest in Hoover, Ed., for you and he are similar types - born organizers and promoters. If Hoover had a little more of your aggressiveness and less of his modest quietness, he would sound much more American. Still if Calvin Coolidge can be an American president, I am sure Herbert Hoover can. I shall never forget Hiram Johnson's tribute to you as he and poor old Jack Eshelman sat, with the rest of us, under the trees at Hurlburt's Grove, Descanso. That seems to be the thing that Coolidge and Hoover lack. Anyhow, when you vote for Hoover - put a silent vote in for Mrs. Gray and I. When Hoover was a candidate for president before, Mrs. Gray was chairman of his El Cajon committee and I headed the local Johnson fight. Johnson won, in El Cajon, by a very few votes. Mrs. Gray, like nearly all the women, was strong for the League of Nations. So was I, but I could 'nt fight Johnson.

I still think that the U.S.A. should have gone into the League. In Paris, in 1921, I had an opportunity of watching the League Council settle a pending war between Serbia and Albania. As an American I got a seat close up to the Council table and took it all in. Wilson was right, and the U.S. would have stood out foremost among the nations as a world power for good if she had followed him. I am sure that Hoover, is, at heart, for the League. I think that he is the biggest international figure in the world to-day, in or out of office. I spent a little time in Belgium and heard of his great work first hand. If he is elected, he will be an outstanding figure in world affairs and will do U.S. good.

In this native Australia of mine, Ed., I have not become half acclimatized in two years. Australia, physically, reaches out for me. The bush (woods), great plains (same as Arizona, New Mexico and Texas) great inland rivers (some of them smaller Mississippi) all claim me as their own child - BUT - the people and their public life ~~has~~ changed, or it seems so to me after my years in the U.S.A. Everywhere, I am wasily identified by my actions and tongue as an American. I am still an American citizen, and I have not yet been tempted or inclined to make any change. I am out of touch with saloons and their selfish fighting, and the years of fighting, as an American, have given me a broader vision than that of my native people. Maybe, I have changed lots as they have.

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When I left the U.S. - the last time, on my road to Australia, My close friends said to me - "Well, you are going back to your native country, but you can always come back, and, if you don't like it, hurry back to U.S.A.". Now, I cannot say that I do not like my own native country, for that would neither be true or natural - but I am just a bit different now, that is all.

We have been in business together, in Melbourne and in Sydney, where we are now. We are in a small grocery, with Mrs. Gray managing and I assisting. This year I went away to Canberra - the new Australian capital for five months - leaving the store to Mrs. Gray, but coming home at each month's end to take care of the book keeping. I organized an early morning delivery system for the only newspaper up there as yet, and created a proper circulation system for the owners. Canberra is cold, like Julian, in the winter time, so I finished my work just in time to escape the winter. I may go out on a newspaper job in the warmer interior soon, in a town where Mrs. Gray's son Bob is working in a Nash and Essex garage. These trips take me away from home and Mrs. Gray and I prefer to be together although we always make the best of everything that comes along.

I have credentials as an American writer of "ability and integrity" from the "Oregonian", Portland, Oregon, and have written several stories for them. The "Oregonian" published a half-page story of Canberra, the Australian Capital, from me, when it opened last year, and the L.A. Times uses some of my stuff, They send me their check, but never send any copies with my stuff in. It is a funny way they have.

The "San Diego Union" and "San Diego Sun" did not use stories that I offered them, nor sent the MSS back or recognition of any kind. I wrote direct to my old boss, Jimmy McMullen, and when I wrote to the "Sun", I told them who I had been in San Diego and mentioned Porterfield, but I never had an answer. Perhaps the "Sun" remembered the fight Robbins and I put up against the Scripps Ranch, Santee, over an El Cajon Mexican who died from injuries received while at work on the ranch. Still, old man Scripps liked me and used to like to call around for me and drive me around Miramar. He and I would talk about everything, until, accidentally, the names of Hiram Johnson, Ed. Fletcher or Edgar Luce came up, when he and I would rile up and swear back and forwards. But, next time that he saw me, he had forgotten all about the argument. I see that the "Union" has slipped from the Spreckels family altogether. Tell us about it when you write.

Now - about old San Diego and its glorious progress. Mrs. Gray still mourns for San Diego, and I don't say anything, but think a lot at some times. When I was in London, in 1922, Charlie Chaplin came home to his native city. He wandered around his old haunts for days and then a newspaper man found him. He asked Charlie if he would like to come back. Charlie said sadly - "A man can't come back". If Mrs. Gray and I return to California, which we may do - having property, friends, and much to attract us there - could I "come back". I think that I could, what say you? Tell us about it. We are still on the young side of 60 and energetic.

Q (I did it myself) *With very best regards to Mrs. Fletcher  
your family and yourself from your friend Gray*

**Ed Fletcher Papers**

**1870-1955**

**MSS.81**

**Box: 9 Folder: 19**

**General Correspondence - Gray, George F.**



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