

1923.

PENLEIGH BOYD

Fellow Artist's Tribute

A MAN SUCCESS DID NOT SPOIL

Specially written for "The Herald"

by J. S. Macdonald

Penleigh Boyd had great courage and audacity and the faculty of youth. These gifts made him what he was as a painter, and possibly contributed in part to his untimely and tragic death.

He was always intolerant of delay, and, once having made up his mind, attacked with fine elan whatever objective he had set himself.

He was very successful, but not on that account rendered inactive. Indeed, his past successes have proved merely to be stepping stones to larger ventures. It was this planning in advance and the daring that prompted it that gave Penleigh Boyd a character quite different from most artists. That character appeared in his work, and there it showed as an emotional quality perpetually endeavoring to expand, the better to tell us precisely what Nature meant to him.

Lately he scrapped his artistic plant to make way for something much more spacious and efficient, and he looked forward with a certain naif, amused curiosity as to how it would turn out. His avowed intention was to say very forcefully what hitherto he had been saying gracefully.

Success in serenely painted things did not suffice. He desired to thump it into people that the world was not only externally beautiful, but full of unseen mysterious agents, of beauties that should be felt even if the eye could not perceive them.

BOUGHT BACK HIS HOME

When he brought out his European collection he said to me: "If this will only open their eyes, I will be satisfied." After the Melbourne showing of the collection, and after the very successful sale of his pictures, with characteristic decision of mind he cabled for his wife and little sons, bought back his Warrandyte home that he had sold when going to Europe, and bought also, alas! the fatal motor car that ended his brilliant young existence.

Half a dozen times he said to me: "Do you know I've bought 'Robins' back. I've got a fine new car, too, to meet them at the boat with and drive them straight out. They know nothing about it. What do you think they'll say when it happens?"

Some weeks later I met him, and I said, "What are you looking so bucked about?" "Well, tomorrow, you know." "What about tomorrow?" "Why, you silly ass, they're coming home!" He felt that everyone should know it.

BIG THINGS IN MIND

His intention was to clean up all his affairs and devote himself to realising his long-brooded aspirations—to give his family and the world the best of what he was capable. What he had done he regarded as little compared to what he intended to do, merely the preliminary to really big things. He was so used to screening the serious side of his nature behind a veil of jokes that he frequently felt the need of emphasising the fact that at bottom his was an earnest philosophical mind.

To those who knew the inner Penleigh Boyd, however, this was superfluous, for in the proper time and place there was nobody with whom one could more quickly get into step and grasp his metaphysics. Beauty was its impulse, beauty of a stimulating exhilarating kind, and he had no apologies in avowing it. In life and in art he was impatient of stodginess and the fear to risk.

In the face of gloomy-faced predictions of failure, he attacked and vanquished many artistic and material adversaries and thought little of it. Each victory but cleared the ground for enlargement.

At his hands the half-gods got little consideration when the gods arrived, but were shown the door promptly. In his philosophy humbug got a very poor hearing and this trait ran through the whole fabric of his character. Radiant, able, full of happy courage and enterprise, Penleigh Boyd will be sincerely mourned for by his fellow artists.