

Dear Theo,

Enclosed I am sending you two photographs, later on you will get two more of weavers.

I intended to have twelve photographs taken – a series of Brabant scenes, including the six I am making for Hermans.

I intended to send them to some illustrated papers, to try to get some work, or at least to become known.

But I have given up the idea, as the photographer only produces copies that do not render the real chiaroscuro, or hardly do; besides, he retouches much and badly, and yet very often leaves dark what is light in the picture, and vice versa.

However, I will have another photo taken of the weavers in carte-de-visite size only, because being so far away from the illustrated papers here, I must find a means to get connections in another way than by words.

This winter I hope to make several drawings, particularly of the same compositions, and to send them, for instance, to the London News, which you may have noticed is now often better than the Graphic, and among other things, has just reproduced a very beautiful Frank Holl, and a beautiful landscape with sheep.

Recently I have been working very hard; I believe, what with other emotions, I have even overworked myself. For I am in a melancholy mood, and all these things have combined to upset me in such a way that there are many days when I am almost paralyzed.

I cannot eat, and I cannot sleep – that is to say, not enough, and that makes one weak.

But I shall get over it again, especially as I have fairly good news from Utrecht.

But I am still very anxious because I am afraid it will be a long time before she has entirely recovered.

Perhaps it will be a long time before I get over it too. I always regret, Theo, that I am standing on one side of a certain barricade, you on the other, which barricade is not actually visible any more as a structure of paving stones, but which certainly does exist socially, and will continue to do so.

In that lithograph by Daumier or Lemud, whichever it may be, the principal subject is a person whose story I remember.

There were two brothers, and they were standing on the same side, and both were killed one after the other, for the same cause.

That might have occurred in our case, but now I am almost sure it will never happen. I, for my part, know well enough that the future will always remain very difficult for me, and I am almost sure that in the future I shall never be what people call prosperous.

I think that Father also feels it is fatality rather than downright intention when there is sometimes such a decided difference of opinion between us. But I wish that I didn't hit other people, that Father had not been standing right in front of me at times. Well, sometimes I think that at all events painting can prevent worse things, and that otherwise it would be even worse. For the future, I have no other plans now than to continue my Brabant subjects till I am far enough along to sell them in Belgium, for instance, or elsewhere.

Then, when I have some firm footing, I should like to go back to the miners once again.

I ask you, not to sympathize with my work, but whenever you know of some resources, tell me so. Rappard has been both in Drenthe and in Terschelling again, and seems to have got a good crop of studies. Probably he will come here again in October for some time. Goodbye,

Ever yours, Vincent

The picture of the sower is as large as that of the woman spinning; the colour of the soil is neutral but just a little pink, light green farther on. The blouse of the man is blue, and his trousers, brown. The gaiters are dirty linen, I think in the picture the head stands out better against the sky than in the photograph.

Just listen, Theo, as to that barricade, you know there was a time in my life when I also stood with the Guizots, etc.

But as soon as I had enough of it, you know how I turned away with energy and persistence.

The younger people now do not want me, however; all right, I don't care; as men, and as painters, I like the generation of about '48 better than those of '84; but from those of '48, not the Guizots, but the revolutionaries, Michelet – and also the peasant painters of Barbizon.

You must decide for yourself what you are going to do about it, but I myself cannot swallow everything. Your apparent indication in your letter that Goupil & Co. are specialists in Millet and Daumier is really too outrageous. Do you really think I am such a dullard as to believe such enormities? In most cases G. & Co. lagged behind with the original artists; well, I know just as well as you what kind of fellows their protégés have been. One of Goupil's best strokes of business is that in recent years they have pushed various Dutchmen such as Maris, Mauve, and that was particularly on N. G.'s initiative. Their having Breton is to all intents and purposes a separate question. But at the time when Millet, Dupré, Corot, Daubigny were young, tell me – did Messrs. Goupil & Co. concern themselves very much with them??

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Breton, this you know, is personally rather different from Millet and Corot and I can well understand that Goupil & Co. consider him "less disagreeable as a man." Daumier – especially the way Daumier was in his earlier days – when I recall this and set against it the Guizotlike character of father Goupil as he was then ... believe me, it amuses me to think of this contrast.

Goupil & Co. has always been a bit orthodox, and has been rather in the habit of looking down on other houses, as if they were something better than the other dealers – well, it was and is tweedledum and tweedledee.

I believe that Millet and Daumier were ignored by practically all art dealers. Once an art lover said of the way the dealers acted with Corot's studies the excellent always escapes them, l'excellent leur échappe toujours. And this remark is shrewd. Usually their opinions are commonplace generalities – like those of Joseph Prudhomme in Monnier's book.

But speculating on this is tedious, for you as well as for me.

Goodbye.

I have just read Mother's note. I am glad you can see from it that I speak less and less to them about what is going on between us. I tell them that everything is all right, and I shall go on telling them so until I say just as succinctly that we have concluded that our affairs were diverging too much. This is true. You belong to Goupil & Co. And Goupil & Co. will certainly not do anything with my work for years to come. In the meantime, I ask you, is it possible for me to reconcile myself to making absolutely no progress, which is what you lead me to expect?

There is something I want to ask you: Why doesn't Cor go to Goupil's just as you and I started life there when we were his age? I hear of a plan to leave him at the Secondary School for a year or two longer – I hear of a luminous idea, suggested in sober earnest by Father, of making a consul of him. And this although nobody in this house, nor any of those with whom preliminary correspondence has been carried on about this matter, has the faintest idea what a consul actually does.

I am not in the least interested in this business, but I think that this consulate is somewhat similar to the conception of the old lady here in the village, who thinks the mounted constabulary such fine fellows to look at. But I am quite surprised I never hear Goupil's mentioned with reference to Cor. Why is this? Especially as you stick to them, methinks it would be the obvious thing for Cor to enter the firm too. Later on you will be company and a help to each other – and at any rate he would be in a better position, learn more, see more, than as a "consul" or in a "notary's office," and so on, or in the "Post Office," all highly genteel occupations, and much of a muchness. As for Cor himself, as far as I know he has no distinct idea whether he would like to take up this job or that, seeing that probably he has not looked at anything at close quarters, except books, the country road, etc. At present I think him a nice boy, but it is certainly time for him to do something practical, as I see it, for otherwise such fellows are apt to go to seed, particularly if they get into too dull an office – go to seed, I mean, with respect to self-sufficiency and becoming a nonentity.