

Letter 031
Paris, 15 July 1875

Dear Theo,

Our Uncle Vincent visited us here, I saw him often and talked about a heap of things with him. I asked him if he saw any chance of getting you a place in the store in Paris.

At first he wouldn't hear of it, saying that you were too valuable in The Hague. Then, after I insisted, he said he would think about it.

He will certainly come to see you while he is in The Hague; he is not going to change from his dullness, let him say what he wants, it will do no harm to you, and won't do you any harm when you need something in the future. Don't talk to me unless you need something.

He is very, very clever. When I was here last winter, one of the things he said to me was, "Supernatural things I may not know, but I know everything about natural things." I do not know if those were his exact words, but that was the meaning.

I can also tell you that one of his favourite pictures is "Lost Illusions" by Gleyre.

Sainte-Beuve said, "In most men there exists a poet who died young, whom the man survived." And Musset said, "Know that often a dormant poet is hidden within us, always young and alive." I think Uncle Vincent belongs to the first group. So you know whom you are dealing with. Ask him squarely if he can arrange for you to have authority here or in London.

Thank you for your letter that came this morning and the poem by Rückert. Do you have a copy of his poems? I would love to get to know them. As soon as I have a chance, I shall send you a French Bible, and The Imitation of Christ. It was probably the favourite book of that lady painted by Ph. de Champaigne. There is a portrait of her daughter, a nun, in The Louvre, also by Ph. de Ch. She has l'Imitation on the chair beside her.

Father wrote to me once: "You know that the same mouth which said: "Be as harmless as the doves," and straight away added: "and wise as a serpent." [Matt. 10:16] Keep that in mind and believe me always,
Your loving brother, Vincent

Do you have the photographs after Meissonier in the gallery? Look at them often; he has painted men. Probably you know his "Le Fumeur à la Fenêtre" and "Le jeune Homme Déjeunant."