

Letter 082
Isleworth, 25 November 1876

Dear Theo,

Thanks for your last letter, which I received at the same time as one from Etten. So you are back at work again; do whatever your hand finds to do with all your strength, and a blessing is certain. How I should have loved to accompany you on that walk to the Heike and to Sprundel in the first snow.

Father wrote me: "in the afternoon I had to go to the Hoeve. Mother had ordered a carriage, but they could not drive because the horses could not yet be calked; so I resolved to go on foot and that kind Uncle Jan would not let me go alone, but went with me. It was an uncomfortable expedition, but Uncle Jan rightly observed: The devil is never so black but you can look him in the face. We arrived and returned home safely, though there was a storm with sleet, so that the road was slippery as ice. It was delightful beyond words to sit comfortably together in a nice warm room in the evening and to rest after labour." Shall we also go together like that to some church someday, being sorrowful yet always rejoicing, with an eternal joy in our hearts because we are the poor in the Kingdom of God? God grant it.

Last Sunday evening I went to a village on the Thames called Petersham In the morning I had been at the Sunday school in Turnham Green, and after sunset I went from there to Richmond and then to Petersham. Soon it became dark, and I did not know the right way. It was a terribly muddy road, on top of a sort of dike, the slope of which was covered with gnarled elm trees and bushes. At last I saw a light in a little house somewhere below the dike, and climbed and waded through the mud to reach it; there they showed me the right way. But, boy, there was a beautiful little wooden church with a kindly light at the end of that dark road. I read Acts 5:14 – 16 and Acts 12:5 – 17, Peter in prison; and then I told the story of John and Theogenes once more. A harmonium in the church was played by a young lady from the boarding school, the pupils of which were all there.

In the morning it was so beautiful on the road to Turnham Green – the chestnut trees and the clear blue sky and the morning sun mirrored in the water of the Thames; the grass was sparkling green and one heard the sound of church bells all around.

The day before I had made a long hike to London. I left here at four o'clock in the morning, and at half-past six was in Hyde park. There the dew was lying on the grass and the leaves were falling from the trees; in the distance one saw the pale lights of the lamps which had not yet been put out, and the towers of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, and the sun rose red in the morning mist. From there I went to Whitechapel, the poor part of London; to Chancery Lane and Westminster; to Clapham to visit Mrs. Loyer again, whose birthday was the day before. I also went to Mr. Obach's to see his wife and children again.

Then I went to Lewisham, where I arrived at the Gladwells at half-past three. It was exactly three months since I had been there on that Saturday when their little daughter was buried. I spent about three hours with them, and we shared many thoughts, too many for expression. From there I also wrote to Harry in Paris. I hope you will meet him someday; it may easily happen that you, too, will go to Paris. At half-past ten in the evening I was back here, having used the underground railway part of the way. I had been lucky enough to collect some money for Mr. Jones.

At Petersham, I warned the community that it was going to hear bad English, but that when I spoke I thought of the man in the parable who said: "Have patience with me, I will pay you fully." Would that God comes to my assistance! At Mr. Obach's I saw the picture, or rather sketch, by Boughton, "The Pilgrim's Progress." If you ever have an opportunity to read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, you will find it greatly worth while. For my part I am exceedingly fond of it. It is nighttime, I am still writing, copying something for the Gladwells at Lewisham, etc.; one must strike the iron while it is still hot, and the heart of man when it is burning within him.

A firm handshake, kind regards to Mr. and Mrs. Tersteeg and to the Roos, Haanebeek, Van Stockum and Mauve families. À Dieu, believe me,

Your most affectionate brother, Vincent