

Amsterdam, 21 October 1877

Dear Theo, I want you to hear from me soon again. Yesterday I had a good letter from Etten, from which I learned that you had already been there and are expected back Saturday night to spend Sunday at home also; probably you are there at this moment, and it will be a good Sunday.

This morning I was at early service in the North Church. Afterward I just took a walk through the city, the canals are especially beautiful now that the leaves of the trees have their autumn hues. Then I went to the English church and heard a very good sermon on, "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed, etc. [see Matt. 6:25; Luke 12:22].

I love that little church, and probably many a person there has memories of things and places which are known to me, also. Have you ever seen or read a book by Esquiros, *Life in England* (or *England and the English Life*)? I haven't, but I think it must be an interesting book.

When you have a chance, don't forget that fragment by Jules Breton and that other one by Michelet.

Did you have a good journey? Let me hear from you soon. It was a delightful surprise when you came here that evening (N.B. the young woman at the station had already been wondering about our hurried departure). It was nice that we saw Mauve there too.

After coming home I sat up working a long time. That is already a week ago now, the days fly by.

How beautiful that engraving after Ary Scheffer, "The Holy Women at the Tomb of Christ," is – I am so glad I have it. The old woman especially is splendid.

Have you got something new for your collection? Go on with it, for it is a good thing.

This morning I saw the Minister of Marine, Taalman Kip, who visited Uncle and lunched here; how much character is in that face and in those grey eyes – he reminded me of old Mr. Goupil or somebody like Guizot.

I do not know why, but for a whole week I have been thinking of that picture and the etching after it, "A Young Citizen of the Year V" by Jules Goupil. I saw the picture in Paris, indescribably beautiful and unforgettable. The many pictures about the days of the Revolution – for instance, "The Girondins" and "Last Victims of the Terror" and "Marie Antoinette" by Delaroche, and that "Young Citizen" and other pictures by Goupil, and the ones by Anker and so many others – what a beautiful unity they form, together with books like those by Michelet, Carlyle, and also Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. In all of them there is something of the spirit of the resurrection and the life – that lives though it seems dead, for it is not dead, but sleepeth.

I should like to read more widely, but I must not; in fact, I need not wish it so much, for all things are in the word of Christ – more perfect and more beautiful than in any other book.

That etching by Jules Goupil was hanging in my room in London for a long time, in the days when I was so full of Michelet and other French authors; I think Harry Gladwell has it now. I had a short note from him after he arrived back in Paris. On a day like this I should like to walk again with him in the twilight, along the Seine, around Notre Dame. Paris is so enchantingly beautiful in autumn, and that spot above all. How pretty the winter chrysanthemums will be in the little gardens in London – they continue to bloom there all the winter through.

Have you planned this winter to read any books, "coûte que coûte"? Sometimes it is right to carry a thing through and to do it with a will. Uncle Jan has also read widely, and there is much that is fine in him. A spiritual affinity and an attachment and love like that between Father and Uncle is a good fruit of life. Though the fire may occasionally merely smoulder because of the pressure of daily cares and troubles, sometimes it flares brightly and brilliantly and gloriously – for instance, as it did that evening last winter when those two went to the Hoeve together.

De top van de Hekla is wit van sneeuw,
Maar 't vuur in zijn binnenst gloeit eeuw na eeuw.
Gij, schoon het winter op 't grijzend hoofd,
De liefde, Gods vlam, is in 't hart niet verdooft.

[The top of the Helka is white with snow,
But the fire within her glows century after century.
Although it be winter on thy greying head,
Love, the flame of God, is not extinguished in thy heart.]

We have seen what this means, and we know something about it. Such a fire of spirit and love is a force of God's opposed to the dark and evil and terrible things of the world and the dark side of life; it is a force of resurrection stronger than any act and a ray of hope which gives consciousness and security to the depths and the secret of the heart. It is expressed in words which are simple but eloquent, "I never despair."

Well, boy, I have still some work to do and must wind this up. Have a good time, try to find something in art and in books; it is written, "Seek and ye shall find," and, "He who needeth wisdom, desireth it from God." And that is what we need.

How is Carolien? Remember me to her and also to the Roos family, and Mauve and Tersteeg if you meet them; a warm handshake from

Your loving brother, Vincent

The portrait of Johan van Gogh reminds one a little of the "Young Citizen." It makes me think of "sorrowful yet always rejoicing," a quality one can find in many things.