

Letter 116a  
Etten, 30 December 1877

Dear Theo,

With all my heart I wish you a Happy New Year, may it be a blessed year for you in many ways. The days when you were here were good, but they did not last long. My vacation will soon be ended too, but I am going to stay for at least one more day, as Pa is so very busy these days, and it will be good to talk things over quietly together and discuss how to set about my further studies.

On New Year's Eve Pa will also have to preach in Prinsenhage, for the Reverend Mr. Kuylman fell and hurt himself, dislocating his arm, and he is unable to fulfill his preaching engagement on New Year's eve; and Pa has offered to take his place. Thus Pa will be preaching nine times in ten days.

If you have not sent the postcard in question to Harry Gladwell yet, please don't for a while; I heard he is not in Paris any longer. Today I wrote to his father; perhaps I shall get a reply, and then I shall have something to add to the roll. You forgot to take the etching after Meissonier with you; I shall send it to you one of these days, together with the lithograph after Jules Breton, "The Fields in Winter," for I refuse to accept it, seeing that it is an indispensable part of your collection.

Last week it snowed, and Cor had great fun with the sled – and I, too – for I went sledding on the road with him and a little girl who was staying with the Stackstroos. Today Father, Mother, Cor and I went for a lovely walk; I wish you could have been with us. Yesterday I went to see Mother's sewing class, which she teaches nowadays in the vestry; it is really lovely – one would like to have a painting of it; already quite a number of children go to it.

By chance I remembered another painting bearing on Brittany, namely Ribot's "La Prière" – a number of children kneeling in the corner of a church at twilight; there is also a big etching of it done by the artist himself, which you may know. Jacque once etched the same subject, but on a smaller scale.

Today I made a list of everything I can remember concerning the French Revolution, to write on the back of the little map of France. I hope to extend the work gradually; for instance, I might write down the most important things about the Middle Ages and the period of the Eighty Years' War, etc. One must hold on to what one has seen or what one knows, for it can always come in handy. If you make similar lists yourself, please send them to me once in a while so we can compare notes; it is wise to do this – with knowledge, it is important to hold on to what one has and to make it as clear in one's mind as possible. Especially when one is short of money, it helps to fill up the gaps in this and similar ways.

Regards to the family, and wish them happiness in my name. It may be that on my way to Amsterdam, I shall stop at The Hague to bring you the prints you left behind; but don't count on it. Again à Dieu; very best wishes and a warm handshake in thought from

Your so loving brother, Vincent

[Vincent's sisters had written at the bottom]

My beloved brother,

A happy New Year, and I wish you lots of good luck. We are all quite anxious to hear about the decisions of the "High Court" in the matter of Goupil, and we hope they will prove favourable to you in every respect. How nice it is to have been together again, but it's a pity the little words have been must be used, don't you think? Well, I am looking forward to Easter, and I suppose it is the bright spot on your horizon, too. What do you say to that preaching? Isn't it a shame? The Reverend Mr. Kuylman did not even half know what a foolish thing he did, to go and hurt his arm at such an inopportune moment. And now adieu. Wil wants some space, too, so I am stopping in a hurry.

Ever your affectionate sister, Lies

Dear Theo,

My warmest wishes for the New Year. Lies tells me to write that she wrote "my beloved brother" by accident. We must go to bed now, good night, a pleasant day.

With much love, Wil