

Dear Theo,

Thanks for your letter of February 17; it made me very happy, as I had been looking forward to it so much. And I am answering it at once, boy, for I think of you and long for you so often, and every morning the prints on the wall of my little study remind me of you – “Christus Consolator”; the woodcut after Van Goyen, “Dordrecht”; “Le Four” by Rousseau, etc. – for I received them all from you. So the pot was calling the kettle black when you wrote me that I ought not to send you a print for your room sometimes when I find one that I think you will like. In my turn I say, Enough of that; but tell me if you have got some new acquisitions for your collection lately.

Last evening at Uncle Cor’s I saw a whole volume of that magazine, L’Art; you have the issue with the wood engravings after Corot. I was especially struck by wood engravings after drawings by Millet, including “Falling Leaves,” “The Ravens’ Wedding,” “Donkeys in a Marsh,” “The Woodcutters,” “Housewife Sweeping Her Room,” “A Farm Courtyard” (night effect), etc. Also by an etching after Corot, “The Dune”; and “St. John’s Eve” after Breton; and others by Chauvin; and another after Millet, “The Beans.”

Last Sunday Uncle Jan and I spent the whole afternoon and evening at Uncle Cor’s. It was a very pleasant day for me. I got up very early and went to the French church in the morning. A clergyman from the neighborhood of Lyons preached here – he had come to collect money for an evangelical mission. His sermon was mainly stories from the lives of the working people in the factories, and though he was not particularly eloquent and one could even hear that he spoke with some difficulty and effort, his words were still effective because they came from the heart – only such are powerful enough to touch other hearts.

At one o’clock I had to be at the Sunday school of an English clergyman, Adler, in the Barndesteeg; he has a small but very neat old church there. However, the school was held in a little room where even at that hour, in the middle of the day, the gaslight had to be turned on. There were perhaps twenty children from that poor section. Though he is a foreigner, he preaches in Dutch (but the service is in English); he teaches his Bible class in Dutch too, and does it very well. I had brought with me a sketch of the map of the Holy Land which I made for Father’s birthday, in red crayon and on strong brown paper, and I gave it to him; I thought that little room would be a nice place for it, and I am glad it hangs on the wall there now. I had met him at Mr. McFarlane’s, the incumbent of the English church in the Beguinage whom I had ventured to call on; he received me kindly and I hope to repeat my visit someday.

Besides this English clergyman, I also ventured to call on the Reverend Mr. Gagnebin. He took it in good part, and told me to come again some evening; as he suggested tonight, I must go there in a little while. I hope to write you all about it. Father has also advised me to try and make some acquaintances. I was so glad to speak French and English again – it is a peculiar sensation when one hasn’t for a long time.

The last two mornings I got up very early to work on a sketch of the map of Paul’s travels which I had begun and have now finished; it looks well now (with the names in French), even better than those I made for Father and for my own room. I plan to give it to the Reverend Mr. Gagnebin, as I want to emphasize that visit if possible: he is a learned man who can perhaps give me some good advice later on if he realizes that my intentions are serious.... I have just been to Gagnebin’s, but I was told that he was too busy to receive me (yet he had fixed this hour and this day for my visit). I heard music in the house, so probably there was something going on. I left what I had made for Gagnebin with the servant, requesting that it be given to him. I want to do such things now and then, for it certainly is very doubtful that I shall ever succeed, I mean, shall ever pass all the examinations. Five years at the least is a very long time; if one begins earlier, it is so much easier. It is true I can work longer and concentrate better, and things that many others care about have no attraction for me; but, after all, the work costs me great effort. Even if I fail, I want to leave my mark here and there behind me.

There are so many, many things one has to know, and though they try to reassure me, it constantly gives me a terribly anxious feeling. There is no remedy but to set to work again, since it is clearly my duty to do this, whatever it costs. So I must push on, for standing still or going back is out of the question: it would make things even more difficult and cause confusion – and the end would mean the necessity of beginning all over again.

I had a nice letter from home; the journey seems not to have done Father any harm. It is pretty late, and I am not a little tired, for I have walked quite a distance today. Have a good time, and blessings on your work and on all you undertake; write soon if you can. My regards to all at the Roosees’, and a warm handshake in thought. Good night and sleep well, believe me,

Your loving brother,
Vincent

Tuesday morning. It is beautiful weather this morning, I have to go to Mendes’s in a few minutes.