

Letter 131
Cuesmes, 5 August 1879

Dear Theo,

I write to you in a great hurry; won't it soon be time for you to go to Paris? If so, write to me the day and the hour, and in all probability I shall see you at the station.

If you have time to stay a day, or more or less, I should be very happy; I should have some drawings to show you, types from here; it wouldn't be worth while for you to leave the train for those alone, but you would easily find something to attract you in the scenery and in the curious aspect of things – everything in this neighbourhood has such a picturesque character.

Have you read *Les Temps Difficiles* [Hard Times] by Dickens? I have written the title in French because there exists a very good French translation for 1fr. 25, in the Hachette edition: *Bibliothèque des meilleurs Romans étrangers*. [Library of the Best Foreign Novels.] It is a masterpiece, the author in this work has painted a moving and sympathetic portrait of a working man called Stephen Blackpool,

I was in Brussels recently, and in Maria Hoorebeke and in Tournay, partly on foot.

For the present I am at the following address: M. Frank, Evangelist at Cuesmes (near Mons) au Marais. There have been many thunderstorms here lately. Do try, dear fellow, and arrange to stay over an hour or so.

Lately I have been at a studio again, namely at the Reverend Pietersen's, who paints in the manner of Schelfhout or Hoppenbrouwers, and has good ideas about art.

He asked me for one of my sketches, a miner type. Often I draw far into the night, to keep some souvenir and to strengthen the thoughts raised involuntarily by the aspect of things here.

But, boy, I have no more time. I have written to Mr. Tersteeg to thank him for the box of paints he sent me, and the sketchbook, which is almost half full already.

In Brussels I bought from a Jewish book dealer another big sketchbook of old Dutch paper.

Shall I see you? How welcome you would be. I promise you Dickens's *Les Temps Difficiles* if you will come to fetch it; otherwise I will send it to you when I have a chance. À Dieu. A handshake in thought, and believe me always,

Yours truly, Vincent