

Letter 135
Cuesmes, 7 September 1880

Dear Theo,

I received in good order the prints, etchings, etc., which you sent me some time ago, and I thank you very much. You did me a great service by sending them.

I can tell you that I have sketched the ten sheets of "Les Travaux des Champs" by Millet (almost the size of a page in Cours de Dessin Bargue), and that I have completely finished one. I should have done more, but first I wanted to make the Exercices au Fusain by Bargue, which Mr. Tersteeg has kindly lent me, and I have now finished the sixty sheets. In addition, I have made a drawing of "Evening Prayer," after the etching which you sent me.

I wish I could show them to you and get your opinion of all this, as well as of some other drawings – for instance, a large sepia drawing after Th. Rousseau, "Four dans les Landes." [Oven in the Landes – vast plain south of Bordeaux.] I had already done it twice in watercolour before I succeeded in finishing it. As I told you before, I should like very much to copy "Le Buisson" by Ruysdael too; you know those two landscapes are in the same style and sentiment.

I have been making rough sketches of these drawings without advancing very much, but lately it seems to be improving, and I am hopeful that it will improve even more. Especially because Mr. Tersteeg and also you have come to my aid with good models, for at present I think it is much better to copy some good things than to work without this foundation. Yet I could not keep from sketching in a rather large size the drawing of the miners going to the shaft which I sent you a hasty sketch of, though I changed the placement of the figures a little. I hope that after having copied the other two series by Bargue, I shall be able to draw miners, male and female, more or less well, if by chance I can have a model with some character; and as to that, there are plenty of them.

The lithograph after Bosboom's "Interior of a Cowshed" is very beautiful. You understood my intentions perfectly when you added "La Malaria" by Hébert to the collection.

If you still have the book with the etchings after Michel, please lend me that sometime, too, but there is no hurry. For the moment I have enough to keep me busy, but I should like to see those landscapes again, for now I look at things with different eyes than I did before I began to draw.

I hope that you will not be too dissatisfied with the drawings after Millet when you see them; those little wood engraving are admirable.

As I already have twenty prints after Millet, you can understand that if you could send me some more, I would make them readily, for I try to study that master seriously. I know that the large etching of "The Diggers" is rare, but be on the lookout for it, and tell me what it will cost. Someday or other I shall earn a few pennies with some drawings of miners; I should like to have that print and "Le Buisson" as soon as I am able to buy it, even if it is rather expensive. The other day I bought for 2.50 francs two volumes of the Musée Universel, in which I found a large number of interesting woodcuts, including three of Millet's. I cannot tell you the pleasure Mr. Tersteeg gave me by letting me have the Exercices au Fusain and the Cours de Dessin Bargue for a while. I worked almost a whole fortnight on the former, from early morning until night, and daily I seem to feel that it invigorates my pencil. With no less eagerness – in fact, more – I am now copying "Les Travaux des Champs." I am now working on "The Sheep Shearers."

Once more my heartfelt thanks for having sent them; everything you can find by that artist will be of the greatest use to me. I have already drawn "The Sower" five times, twice in small size, three times in large, and I will take it up again, I am so entirely absorbed in that figure.

Whenever you write to me (which would be a very welcome distraction), could you tell me something about the etchings by A. Legros? If I remember correctly, I saw a dozen of them in England, and they were very beautiful. This is all for today. Thanking you again, and with a handshake,

Vincent

Accept my congratulations on the occasion of September 10.

C/o Charles Decrucq,
3 Rue du Pavillon,
Cuesmes, near Mons

These are the Millets I have:
The Sower
Angelus
Reapers Binding the Sheaves

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Woodcutter and his Wife in the Wood
Fields in Winter
Young Farmer
Les travaux des Champs, 10 sheets
The Four Hours of the Day, 4 sheets

Do you still have an old woodcutter alone in the wood in your collection of wood engravings?