

Amice Rappard,

It pleases me to be able to send you the enclosed wood engravings. You will see that these too are somewhat damaged along the folds, which is not caused by the forwarding but rather by their having been so long in use in a public library. But you will be able to paste them together, as I myself have to do quite often. Please let me know whether you have a small figure of a woman by McQuoid – she is holding a light in her hand on the stairs of an armory, where one sees the glint of armour. I think I have already given it to you, as well as the “Girl in White” leaning against a tree, but if you do not have it, I shall add it to another batch some time. McQuoid is one of the most distinguished of the English illustrators. I think you will also like the Renouards – later on I may be able to add a few others, as the Jew told me he had part of the kit of old magazines (from which I took these as well as mine) at home; he had not brought them along because they were too badly damaged. As soon as I have time, I am going to hunt through that mess – which, by the way, is not a pleasant job.

Personally I think “The Strike of the Miners” superb; I feel sure you will like it too.

I have taken a lot of trouble to get things about miners. This and an English one of an accident are the most beautiful – but for the rest these subjects are rare – I wish I myself could make studies of them eventually. Do let me know, Rappard, but in all seriousness, whether – if I went away – for instance to the mining district of the Borinage for two months – you would like to come with me.

It is rather a difficult stretch of country – such a journey is not a pleasure trip – but it is one of those things I should undertake with enormous pleasure as soon as I feel I have gained more dexterity in drawing people in action with lightning speed – for I know that there are so many beautiful things to do which have hardly, if ever, been painted by others. But because one has to contend with all kinds of difficulties in such a district, it would not be superfluous to have a friend along.

Anyway, at present my circumstances would not permit it, but the thought is deeply rooted in my mind.

Recently I have been working often on the beach, either drawing or painting. And I am more and more attracted by the sea.

I don't know what your experience has been with artists here – more than once I have found that fellows started to abuse most maliciously what they call “the illustrative,” and this in a way that showed me quite clearly that they were wholly unacquainted with the subject, and hadn't the slightest idea of what is going on in this field. Moreover, they were not to be convinced, or rather they did not choose to take the trouble to look at things themselves. And when they did look, it remained in their heads for only a short time, and then went out of them radically.

Now I know from my experience with you that you think quite differently about it.

The other day I found some other things by Lançon: a “Soup Distribution,” a “Gathering of rag pickers,” a “Snow-Cleaning Gang”; I got up during the night to look at them again, so strong was the impression they had made on me.¹

And especially as I myself am working at trying to do things that interest me more and more – scenes in the street, the third-class waiting room, on the beach, in a hospital – my respect for those great black-and-white artists of the people, as for instance Renouard or Lançon or Doré or Morin or Gavarni or du Maurier or Ch. Keene or Howard Pyle or Hopkins or Herkomer or Frank Hol, and countless others, is forever increasing.

Perhaps you feel the same way to some extent.

Well – however that may be – I always find it highly interesting that you are working away at subjects that are so very sympathetic to me, and at times I feel really sorry that we live rather far away from each other, and have relatively little contact with each other.

I have no more time to write now, so receive a handshake in thought, and believe me,

Ever yours, Vincent

Herewith a very hasty sketch of a watercolour I am working on [F 951, JH 197].²

1. See letter 229 to Theo, written on September 9, 1882

2. See also the illustration with letter 230 to Theo.