

Dear Theo,

Thanks for your letter and the enclosure. It was just what I wanted and helped me to work as hard at the end of the month as I did in the beginning.

I am very glad to hear that Serret is a painter, about whom you had already written things which I perfectly well remember, but the name had escaped me. I should like to write to you much more than I shall do in this letter, but of late, when I come home, I don't feel like writing, after sitting in the sun all day. As to what Serret says, I quite agree with him – I shall just send him a line, because I should like to become friends with him. As I told you already, I have been busy drawing figures recently; I will send them especially for the sake of Serret, to show him that I am far from indifferent to the unity and the form of a figure.

Do you ever see Wallis, is that watercolour of the auction perhaps something for him; if it were something for Wisselingh, then he would certainly be the right one to take it. To Wisselingh I once gave a few heads and recently I have sent him that lithograph. But as he did not answer with a single word, I think if I sent him something more, I should get nothing but an insult. [Wallis and Wisselingh were art dealers on friendly terms with the two brothers]

It has just happened to me that Van Rappard, with whom I have been friends for years, after keeping silent for about three months, writes me a letter, so haughty and so full of insults and so clearly written after he had been in The Hague, that I am almost sure I have lost him for ever as a friend.

Just because I tried it first at The Hague, that is in my own country, I have full right and cause to forget all those worries and to attempt something else outside my own country.

You know Wallis well, perhaps you can broach the subject apropos of that watercolour, but act according to your discretion. If I could earn something with my work, if we had some firm ground, be it ever so little, under our feet for our daily existence, and if then the desire to become an artist took for you the form of, let me say, Hennebeau in *Germinal*, [A famous novel by Zola] discounting all difference in age, etc. – what pictures you could still make then! The future is always different from what one expects, so one never can be sure. The drawback of painting is that, if one does not sell one's pictures, one still needs money for paint and models in order to make progress. And that drawback is a bad thing. But for the rest, painting and, in my opinion, especially the painting of rural life, gives serenity, though one may have all kinds of worries and miseries on the surface of life. I mean painting is a home and one does not experience that homesickness, that peculiar feeling Hennebeau had. That passage I copied for you lately had struck me particularly, because at the time I had almost literally the same longing to be something like a grass mower or a navvy.

And I was sick of the boredom of civilization. It is better, one is happier if one carries it out – literally though – one feels at least that one is really alive. And it is a good thing in winter to be deep in the snow, in the autumn deep in the yellow leaves, in summer among the ripe corn, in spring amid the grass; it is a good thing to be always with the mowers and the peasant girls, in summer with a big sky overhead, in winter by the fireside, and to feel that it always has been and always will be so.

One may sleep on straw, eat black bread, well, one will only be the healthier for it.

I should like to write more, but I repeat, I am not in a mood for writing, and I wanted to enclose a note for Serret besides, which you must read also, because I write in it about what I want to send before long, especially because I want to show Serret my complete figure studies. Goodbye,

Yours, Vincent

Serret may agree with you that to paint good pictures and to sell them are two separate things. But it is not at all true. When at last the public saw Millet, all his work together, then the public both in Paris and in London was enthusiastic.

And who were the persons that had suppressed and refused Millet? The art dealers, the so-called experts.