

Letter 086  
Dordrecht, 26 February 1877

Dear Theo,

The hours that we spent together slipped by too quickly. I think of the little path behind the station where we watched the sunset behind the fields and the evening sky reflected in the ditches, where those old trunks covered in moss stand and, in the distance, the little windmill – and I feel I shall often walk there, thinking of you.

I have enclosed a photograph of The Huguenot; hang it in your bedroom. You know the story: the awakening on the day before St. Bartholomew's, a young girl, who knows what is going to happen, forewarned her lover and insisted that he wear the insignia of the Catholics, a white brassard around his arm; his refusal because he feels that his Faith and his duty were stronger than his love for his sweetheart. I don't remember whether I've already sent you that poem by Longfellow<sup>1</sup> which I'm enclosing a copy of now. It has often given me pleasure and will do the same for you. I am glad that we saw the pictures by Scheffer together. That evening I went to see Mager<sup>2</sup>, who boards with the sexton of the Lutheran church, in a real old Dutch house; his room is nice. We sat talking together a long time; he told me about Menton and a Christmas he had celebrated there. Thanks for coming this way yesterday. Let us have as few secrets from each other as is possible. That is what brothers are for.

A pile of futile tasks has given me a lot of work today; but that is my duty; if one did not have it, very tenaciously have the feeling for it, how would anybody be able to collect one's thoughts at all? The feeling of duty sanctifies and unifies everything, making one large duty out of the many little ones. Write me soon whether you arrived safely, and whether or not the walk and journey were too much for you. I am anxious for a letter from you, to hear also if you are going to Etten. A handshake from  
Your loving brother, Vincent

This is perhaps a time when you feel the want of "a Psalm tone from the past, and a plaint from the cross."

And I seemed to hear in the stillness of the night  
His voice so tender and so soft.

1. "The Light of the Stars."
2. Nico Mager, at the time fellow employee in Blussé and v. Braam's bookstore.