

Letter 186
The Hague, c. 10 April 1882

Dear Theo,

Today I have mailed you a drawing which I send to show my gratitude for all you have done for me during what would otherwise have been a hard winter. Last summer when you showed me Millet's large woodcut "The Shepherdess," I thought, How much can be done with one single line. Of course I don't pretend to be able to express as much as Millet in a single contour. But I tried to put some sentiment into this figure. I only hope this drawing will please you.

And at the same time you can see that I am hard at work. Now that I have started, I should like to make about thirty studies from the nude.

In my opinion the enclosed is the best figure I have drawn yet, therefore I thought I should send it to you. It is not the study from the model, and yet it is directly after the model. [F 929a, JH 130] You should know that I had two underlayers beneath my paper. I had been working hard to get the right contour; when I took the drawing from the board, it had been imprinted quite correctly on the two underlayers, and I finished them immediately according to the first study [F929, JH 129]. So this one is even fresher than the first. I am keeping the other two for myself, I wouldn't like to part with them.

You will see from this that it is not without reason that I wrote you, I would rather not return the money to Tersteeg now; I need it so much myself, and I think that working hard with a model is the fastest way to succeed. It is true the model I have is not so very expensive, but as the expense recurs almost daily, it is often hard enough for me to pay. Well, arrange it the way you think best; but if it's convenient, send what you promised not too late in the month. Adieu, a handshake,

Yours sincerely, Vincent

I think this drawing would look well on a simple grey mount. Of course I don't always draw this way, but I'm very fond of the English drawings done in this style, so no wonder I tried it for once; and as it was for you, and you understand these things, I didn't hesitate to be rather melancholy. I wanted to say something like

"Mais reste le vide du coeur,
Que rien ne remplira"

[But there remains the void in the heart
That nothing will fill],

As in Michelet's book.