

Amice Rappard,

I had just gone out to the printer's when I met the postman, who gave me your letter. My heartfelt thanks for your proposal, which I shall write about in a minute. First I want to tell you that I am working on my fourth stone, and am sending you herewith the impressions of the three you don't have. I shall have to retouch two of them, namely the "Digger" [F 1656, JH 262] and the "Coffee Drinker."¹ The latter was much more striking as a drawing; in the lithograph I have used autographic ink, which did not transfer very well, and the "quickness" of the drawing has to a great extent gone out of it. There was also more animation in the black parts, as the hatching expressed the direction and form of the folds much more strongly. Well, the same is true of the "Digger," but this sheet has in general acquired a certain vigour and ruggedness which corresponds with the character of the figure, though I should have liked a greater diversity of tone. I am now trying to find a way to combine the new method (transferring the drawing on paper) with the old (working directly on the stone). You may remember the drawing "Worn out" [F 864, JH 051]; I did it all over again the other day – actually three separate times, with two models – and I am going to toil on it a lot more. For the present I have one which will be the subject of the fifth stone; it shows an old workman sitting lost in thought, his elbows on his knees, and his hands clasping his head (this time with a bald crown).² [F 997, JH 267; F 1662, JH 268; F 998, JH 269]. I'm telling you all this about the lithographs in order to show you that I'm very keen on it, and consequently that your proposal about the money that was lost is most welcome.

The letter has not been found yet, and it contained a 50-franc note. But let's wait a bit for the present; the matter is being investigated. I told the man at the printer's of this catastrophe, and so far he has been sufficiently well disposed toward me not to press me for payment of the cost of the stones. For that matter, the stones are in his possession, so he isn't running any risk, or hardly any.

So about your offer – in case of need I shall gladly accept; it means a backing for me, and I can now venture to take a few more steps, but perhaps it will not be necessary, because the letter may still turn up. But it is most certainly an incitement to redouble my efforts, and to prove to you that I am working away at it rather strenuously. I drew the Digger in twelve different poses, and I am still trying to find something better. He is a marvellously fine model, a true veteran digger.

Last Sunday Van der Weele, the painter who teaches drawing at the secondary school here, came to see me; he saw the various drawings of the orphan-men and urgently advised me to make a large composition of them – which I think premature, however. I want to make still more studies; the "Coffee Drinker" is one of them. Enclosed is a wood engraving after Frank Hol. That reminds me of the lot of magazines you have bought. I congratulate you on getting them; '70 – '72 is exactly – at least primarily – the great period of the English artists. At the time Black and White was flourishing and in its full vigour. I think there must be splendid things among them.

I'll tell you why it means so much to me to push on with the lithographs so vigorously. If I can manage to get a number of good stones together (there is sure to be a failure once in a while), I will be able to apply for work – for instance, in England too. It stands to reason that one has a better chance to succeed if one can show some work at the same time – for instance, by sending copies of lithographs – than if one tries to get results with words alone.

Sending drawings is inadvisable, as they can easily be lost. This new process enables me to work for a lithographic printing office at a distance without having to send the stones themselves. I bought a new kind of ink and a new kind of crayon [Kopal crayon], today. My present address is 136, Schenkweg. I shall be glad to have your opinion of the copies I'm sending you. If it is possible for me to correct any faults, I shall be glad to do so. Yet one must be careful once it is drawn, for then one no longer has full control. I think you'll rather like the new "Worn Out" – tomorrow I hope to attack the lithograph of it.

Well, my page is full now – although I have written only about professional matters, don't think that I'm not concerned about your illness. On the contrary, I worry all the more when I remember how I caught cold too last summer, and had a rather high fever, and – and – however, I hope with all my heart that it isn't the same with you. However this may be, I most sincerely wish you a speedy recovery, and believe me, with a handshake,
Ever yours, Vincent

1. See letter 246 to Theo, 22 November 1882
2. See letter 247 to Theo, 24 November 1882.