

Letter R25
The Hague, c. 9 February 1883

Amice Rappard,

I just received the roll of wood engravings. My hearty thanks for them. They are beautiful, all of them – the Heilbuth more beautiful than any of the sheets already in my possession. I remember that you spoke to me at one time about their extraordinarily fine execution. Why should I remember? – just because I was struck by the execution, which is exactly what my brother described in a recent letter. When you come here I am going to show you what it is done on, and I expect you to be somewhat surprised, as I was myself. I don't doubt for a moment that you will then get to the bottom of how those grey, white and black effects are obtained.

The sheet I am most delighted with at present is Lucas's "The Light of Other Days," which is exactly like one of Andersen's fairytales. Oh, I think it so beautiful and characteristic. Now I happen to have a "Sylvesternacht" [New Year's Eve] – I don't know by whom, but it's a German – also a night watchman in front of a church-tower shutter in the snow, which is a companion piece, so to speak. And how beautifully vigorous the engraving is!

Marchetti's "Au Pesage" [At the Weighing] has a lot of life – greatly resembles Small.

I have two curious sheets by Gussow besides; the one with the two old people is good. That Beautiful Wretch is alluring. What a contrast there is in the engraving between the illustrations in it and, for instance, The Light of Other Days. I knew some of the little figures in it already, as they have been reproduced in the Univers Illustré; if my memory is correct. But most of them were quite new to me, and some I thought splendid, e.g. the little figure in white against a background of wooded brown dunes or heath, and also "The Stroll in the Snow" and "The Old Lady in Black by the Fireside." The latter is what I would call "cosy" in the highest degree.

These may be only impressions – but they're fresh. It is a magnificent lot; once more, my hearty thanks!

Have you got "Snowballing," a full-page print by Ed. Frère in the London News – a school playground with boys? I just got a duplicate.

I found an uncommonly fine sheet by Vautier at the same time, "Eine Verhaftung" [An Arrest]. I am so very eager to have you here – not only because from selfish motives I am eager for your company, but because I firmly believe that particularly the wood engravings in these first years of the Graphic will so impress you as to give you "the full certainty" of their importance. Not that I still believe you're not attached to them with all your heart – on the contrary, I no longer have any doubt about it. But all the same, there are some sheets that you probably don't know yet and that will make the whole even richer and sounder.

It seems to me that when one has a sheet in one's possession and looks at it repeatedly, one gets to admire it more and more. I think you know all three Herkomers I am sending you today, but it is my desire that you should have them for yourself.

And I often spoke to you, amice, about Pinwell and Walker. Well, here is a genuine Walker, first rate. Have I praised it too highly?

Now you must accept these without any more ado, and also the other duplicates which I shall get out of the Graphics. A collection of sheets like these becomes, in my opinion, a kind of Bible to an artist, in which he reads from time to time to get in a devotional mood. I think it's not only a good thing to know them, but also to have them around continually in the studio.

I don't doubt for a moment that (unless you should have them already), upon receiving these sheets, you'll feel at once that it's a good thing to have them, and that you'll never part with them.

If you should feel some pangs of conscience about accepting these and other sheets, well, just think over whether you have ever regretted taking those first ones with you last year. I don't believe it; it may be because of this or something else – but it is a fact that you think about your collection much more often this year than you used to. And that's only natural; just having these sheets oneself causes one to think of them more often and impresses them clearly and strongly on one's mind. And so I believe that these will have the same result – they will become your friends more and more. Well, personally I don't regret having given them to you, for you appreciate them and look at them as they ought to be looked at. There are so few who have a feeling for them; and it is certainly true that since you have an eye and a heart for them, I have become so attached to your friendship that it would be hard for me to do without it.

I used to think years ago that most artists had the same kinds of feelings and ideas about art as you and I, but in some sense this is not true at all.

Well, so much for that. Trust me in this matter, and accept them without more ado. You will get more of them when you have recovered completely and come to see me.

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I have something more to tell you in connection with Hol's "Irish Emigrants." The character of the woman I wrote you about is something like that of the principal figure of that sheet – I mean the mother with the baby on her arm – i.e. considered as a whole, without any attention to details. I could not give you a better description of her.

Now, old fellow, get well soon, and write me a letter before long – have no scruples about this batch – thanks again for yours – a firm handshake in thought,

Ever yours, Vincent