

Letter R27
The Hague, c. 18 – 20 February 1883

Amice Rappard,

About a week ago I sent you a little roll of wood engravings with a letter enclosed. Since then I have taken the Graphics apart.

There was a preponderant reason that made it desirable. Looking through twenty-one volumes is a job that takes up too much time. Of course, there is a whole lot in it that leaves me indifferent and is only useless rubbish.

I think it desirable, moreover, to keep the things by Small or Herkomer, or Green or Frank Hol, for instance, together, instead of having them scattered among things that do not match them in the least. When one has taken out only the best and most characteristic sheets, it is possible to get a general view of them within a few hours. And one does not need a long time to hunt up a particular thing.

And so I have done it after all. And I have already sorted those I have taken out too – but I haven't mounted them yet.

The bindings of the volumes can now serve as portfolios, and I am going to complete the collection of Graphic wood engravings by adding all the other things I have already.

It means a lot of drudgery but it certainly is stimulating work – for I count myself a lucky fellow to have something so pleasant around the studio, now and forever.

Of course I have quite a number of duplicates available.

I have another kind of drudgery on my hands; the fact being that I have started a sort of battle with my landlord to get a number of privileges – I mean alterations in the studio. And of course it is not easy to get him to do something.

And yet – I made a pact with him just now by which he granted me at least some of these privileges. He does not find it easy to get tenants for his houses, and what I asked him for was wood which he had no immediate need for.

I assure you it is quite an advantage, for the studio will gain a lot by it. Well, I am glad I attacked him. I got the idea of starting a fight with him while reading Fritz Reuter's *Ut mine Festungstid* – perhaps you know the book – in which there is the highly funny story of the way in which Fritz R. and others who had been sentenced to detention in a fortress tricked the "town major" into granting them all kinds of advantages.¹ Speaking of Reuter, don't you think that the figure of Bräsig in *Dried Herbs*² is glorious – and his Havermann? I think it as beautiful as anything by Knaus and Vautier.

I have been working recently on large figures (busts, or rather figures down to the knees), which are intended as staircase wall decorations. Six pieces on cardboard in black and white.

It will be much easier to look through the wood engravings whenever you come here. You will be interested, for instance, in Boyd Houghton's "Mormons," "Indians," some London sketches and a number of sheets about "Paris during the Commune," perhaps thirty pieces in all. And some large compositions, "Emigrants" and "Mormon Prayer Meeting."

I now have seven large sheets by du Maurier – first and foremost "Dieppe Harbor," the finest of them all – you know it – and then "Musical Rehearsal," "Rival Grandpas" and "Before Dinner" – now in the Graphic portfolio "Battledore and Shuttlecock," "Sketch in the Monkey House" and "Cricket Match."

But there is also a "Ladies' Boarding School," which I do not have; perhaps it occurs in the very first numbers of the Graphic.

Otherwise I have never seen any large compositions by him. The series is done by du Maurier and Miss Edw. Edwards M. E. F., and the latter has some sheets in it that are almost as beautiful as those by du Maurier himself.

Do you know J. D. Linton (monogram JDL)? A crowd of females (during some "Commune") he has drawn is superb. "Jewish Synagogue," "Tower" etc., are also very striking. But you will greatly enjoy the Ch. Greens, large sheets, including a "Hospital" – benches full of patients – which is excellent.

I am writing you because there was a letter in the little roll of wood engravings I sent you (which is really prohibited) – in it I thanked you for your package – and because of this you might not have got it.

Is your recovery progressing? And have you gone back to your work completely? Adieu – write soon. I did receive your little roll, but no letter.

Ever yours, Vincent

1. See letter 268 to Theo.

2. The name of the Dutch translation of Reuter's complete works. Vincent means the novel *Ut mine Stromtid*, in which "Uncle Bräsig" is a conspicuous humorous character.