

Dear Theo,

I just came back from Utrecht, from my visit to Rappard, and am glad to find your letter. Many thanks for it as well as for the enclosure. I am glad you are having a good time just now – “Le Paradou” must have been glorious indeed. Yes, I should not mind trying my hand at such a thing and I do not doubt you two would be very good models.

However, I prefer to see diggers digging, and have found glory outside Paradise, where one thinks more of the severer: “Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow.”

But I think the beauty of one increases when compared to the other.

I see from your letter that you are rather worried by what I wrote you concerning the woman. But it has redressed itself once again, and I hope the time will come when things go much better still.

When you come, I shall be able to tell you better than I can write it, just what makes me anxious about her sometimes. I repeat, the woman’s thorough recovery, in soul as well as in body, is a work of years. You need not suddenly worry, as if something exceptional had happened, when my letters occasionally show some uneasiness; it cannot be otherwise. But in no case mention it to others. In general, she is getting on very well, and is making progress; but at times I do feel anxious, though I find nothing extraordinary in anything that happens to me. Well, we shall talk it over again sometime. In no case think ill of her – she has awfully good traits in her character which, with some luck, are worth fostering.

Now about my visit to Rappard. I am very glad to have been there: we shall now see more of each other in the future. I thought one picture of his – a woman spinning and especially the large sketch for it – very serious and really sympathetic. Then fusains – one of a room in an asylum for the blind, one of a kind of smithy with striking figures, very good.

A second picture, representing tile painters, was in Amsterdam, but I saw the studies and the sketches for it.

My impression of certain changes for the better in his way of thinking was confirmed too.

I do hope our friendship will ripen from year to year, that we shall get more and more interested in each other’s work.

He had a small watercolour of a village churchyard which I thought exquisite of sentiment, very original.

If you know the Belgian painter Meunier – some things in Rappard’s work reminded me of him.

Of course, we talked much about new projects and plans during these visits to each other.

I firmly intend to start a few large fusains with figures, too.

But, Theo, the work brings so many expenses: and in many things I haven’t the free hand that would be necessary. Of course, the household costs are heavy too. One needs food and clothes, there is also the studio rent; well, but it certainly has cheered me that Rappard likes several things I’ve done, and now that I’ve seen what his own work is like, I am even more glad that some of my things pleased him.

I am always afraid of not working enough; I think I can do so much better still, and that is what I am striving for, sometimes with a kind of fury. And I see again in Rappard how practical it is to use good stuff, to work often with the model, etc. Rappard’s studio is very good and looks very comfortable.

I wish you would bring my old studies with you when you come.

I think if you saw all the things together, you would choose differently, and, when you are here, I hope we can select the things you would like to have, so that they form a whole. I myself cannot judge whether some of my studies are finished enough to be worthy of being kept anywhere else but in my studio.

Well, I came back from Rappard’s full of plans and full of hope, because there I saw the fruits of the studies already – that is to say, combinations of different figures in more important compositions. That is what I can expect too. But it takes time, and in the meantime one must go on making new studies after the model. The good things can be separated from among them. The best of our arrangement is that the studies are kept together, either by you or by me – let us keep courage and grind on.

I am going out with Van der Weele early tomorrow morning. Adieu, boy; again, many thanks, and all good wishes for yourself,

Yours sincerely, Vincent