

Les Vallées  
Auviers-sur-Oise

22 Feb. 1890.

My dear Tom,

Now that I am settled down at home again, and have had a day or two's rest and change, I begin to think of writing to you again, to tell you how I find every-body, the place, and my general plans. The voyage, as you will have learnt from Mother's letter was not bad for a wintery one, but the North Atlantic in winter time is at best an undesirable piece of water to cross. But I find everything here so cosy and home-like that it fully repays all the discomfort of the journey. Adda, Aunt Hester, and the two little ones are as well as possible, now that the last symptoms of the influenza have disappeared, and all rejoicing in the rosy cheeks that the country and climate produce. I arrived here at 3.30 Tuesday afternoon, having stopped over a few hours to do my bank business at Paris. The children have grown very much, and are as rosy and plump

as possible. Alfred talks and sings very  
prettily, and had not forgotten either me  
or what I had done and said before leaving.  
We went out for a walk, and he told me  
all the events of our last walk in the  
same direction, up over the plain, by the  
red cross, taking a glance at the "Church"  
and on <sup>the</sup> down the valley's home. "Petite Soeur"  
is an engaging young lady, and very gentle, <sup>both</sup>  
of them play together prettily and <sup>asked</sup> all  
sorts of questions about you all and the  
"cousins en Amérique", who have sent  
him so many pretty things. Ada & myself  
have spent a couple of days putting  
things in perfect order, and I in sharpening  
my tools and getting ready for another siege  
with brush and palette. Ada had arranged  
things very nicely, and made several purchases  
of good old furniture very cheap at a sale  
in the village. Taking advantage of my fresh  
impressions I want to make several little  
improvements and use up several pails of  
variously tinted Kalsomine, in still

3  
farther ~~up~~ <sup>improving</sup>; and to make the place  
all we would like it to be, for ourselves  
and the reception of friends who are ex-  
pected to visit us here through the summer.  
I want also to get a rug or two when in  
Paris. I have not gone up since Tuesday  
wishing to put all straight here, and to  
let my mind subside into definite plans,  
after talking everything over with Ada.  
Certainly Beversee seems like home in many  
ways, and this place pleases me more  
than ever, in fact so much so, that my  
first thought of purchasing it, comes to  
me more strongly than ever. I see such  
possibilities in it for a home and studio  
without destroying anything, only adding here  
and there as means and circumstances  
allow. Before leaving New York I had several  
long discussions with Mercier, Horace and  
Beckwith relative to returning to America.  
They all unanimously agreed that I had  
better live and produce at or in the  
vicinity of Paris and make business  
trips to the U.S. like the present one,  
and that the necessity for frequent trips

would gradually diminish as my reputation  
increases. Then some years later on when  
I am thoroughly established in fame  
to come to America to live. But they  
feared that both my own pleasure in  
producing serious works of art as well as  
the sale of them would suffer from an  
American residence, in the midst of  
a civilization altogether given over to  
"business," and in the unsettled process of  
formation. So you see I arrive much  
at the same place as when I last left  
America. My own pleasure as an American  
citizen as well as friendly and family connections  
would make it appear best to try to live  
in America, but every system has its defects,  
and the present one, with its separation of  
the productive and practical parts of my  
life is not a bad one. — As to Ada, both for  
climate and customs, she is much more  
at home here, and would prefer remaining  
here for at any rate some years.

And of course it is pleasant to be near  
her people. She says, "If you wish to buy  
us a home, and ask my opinion, I would  
prefer to have it here, and know of no place  
to which I am more attached than  
Awers." So I am seriously considering  
the purchase of this place. There are a  
lot of little improvements I wish to make  
which will not demand expense so much  
as intelligence and a little work, and if  
I do them before purchasing, I shall be  
obliged to pay for them as well as do them  
so that we wish to settle ~~what~~ <sup>matters</sup> as  
soon as possible, and make the bargain  
before doing them. At any rate if we wish  
to let or sell, the place is so much  
liked, that I am sure a little arranging  
would make it a good investment.

As to price the first figures given were  
~~francs~~ \$5,000. - or 1,000 dollars, and I should try to  
better this, so as to include at least the  
legal fees which are large in France.  
I should try to arrange to pay something  
down and the rest in one or two notes,  
at a sufficient interval and with a

Moderate interest. 4 or 5 percent is the  
usual thing here. Then once the thing is  
in my own name, I can begin making  
the improvements needed, such as  
putting a skylight in the barn for a  
studio for the summer. — a liberal use  
of the paint <sup>& Kalsomine</sup> a pot &c. Then next year,  
all being well, take off the thatched roof and  
put in a mansard in tile giving us another  
set of bed rooms in the top of the house  
and making it three stories high, and finally  
in fact I see how it can be made into a  
regular little mansion without destroying any  
of the solid part already built or putting in  
any very heavy work. — However I shall  
think seriously about it again, and Adèle  
herself will hold councils over it & reach  
a decision for the best all round. At any  
rate Luvers seems to have brought good  
fortune to me in every way, and there is  
no use in going against Providence by  
making a forced move. God's own shines  
just as brightly on France as America

and we must do the best thing to hand  
in both hemispheres. Now, my dear Tom,  
I hardly think I fully explained the matter  
to Mr. Mercier - thus I will now do in strict  
confidence, as he makes me special arrangements  
on account of friendship and my interest  
in his work and progress. He etches the  
plate of good size, the old woman's figure to be  
16 inches in length for the figure mentioned  
\$1200, endeavoring to complete it by Sept.  
31<sup>st</sup> or thereabouts, we pay the copper \$30<sup>00</sup>  
is usual, for this, we pay Mr. C. & myself \$100<sup>00</sup>  
each, Mr. C. cash; and myself, guaranteeing  
\$120<sup>00</sup> - which Mercier is obliged to pay but  
New York agent, as the profits of the work  
may warrant up to \$600 - but this is  
not to be paid <sup>by me</sup> if the profits do not reach  
that figure, <sup>and not till the sales reach the figure mentioned</sup> which is most highly im-  
probable. Then the plate is ours. Mercier  
thinks the work will be a profitable one, and  
only undertakes it now because he likes  
both the picture and myself. He thinks parchment  
proofs should sell for \$100 and Japan \$50 -  
at any rate 100 of the former & 200 of the latter  
should be sold. reckoning one-half off for the cost

of putting on the market and dealers' profits. As to just how we shall put it out, that will be taken into consideration when the plate is completed and the proof satisfactory. We might then if it seemed best sell it right out, but that will all be considered in due time.

Now as to our company scheme. I wish it could still be arranged, in some form or other. Mr. Scripps' inability through press of other work to take hold of it, made me let it rest for the moment. I still feel the scheme is a good one, and with five pictures could be made to pay. I send you the papers and if you folks at Toledo, feel like organizing into some sort of a company, I am all ready on my part to enter into the contract and produce the works as proposed. It seems as though sufficient capital could be raised in Toledo, and then it would be altogether. You could be president, Chandler or someone else vice-president, and Abe Chesbrough secretary and treasurer. At any



rate I send you the papers and you  
can do what seems best to you in the  
matter. It is a good scheme, but if it  
does not go, I can keep right on working  
steadily here, and coming over on business  
from time to time as usual.

~~At any rate~~ try to see Abe. Chestbrough,  
Mr. Oswald and others interested and explain  
matters finding out their pleasure in the  
affair, and I shall let events decide  
the matter. — So much for business, I  
feel very comfortable here, and see my  
work laying ready to take up again. The  
"Cup of Cold Water" is on the easel by me  
as I write and I shall probably put a  
few touches on it in a day or two.

All join in love. Uda will write Mother  
and Ida, ~~and~~ Hoping to hear soon,  
good news from you all, and that Lucy  
is better, with love & kisses from the  
little French Cousins & all at East <sup>Woods</sup>  
believe me your Affectionate Brother.

Robt. J. Wickenden

P.S. Just keep the balance a few <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>on</sup>, as I

May need some little accounts settled  
from time to time. If it will not  
inconvenience you, kindly send sixty one  
cents, to the tax receiver of Chisago Co.  
at Centre City. Chisago Co. minus for  
lots 4 & 5 of Block 21 of Rogers's  
addition to Wyoming. It is payable  
before June 1<sup>st</sup>, the register of deeds is  
Albert Berg, but I suppose the taxes go to  
the auditor. I am just going up to  
Paris and will try to see Madame Dandigny  
about the paintings I told you of. I have  
written to Mr. Chandler telling him I had placed  
the ~~Fr. Union~~ <sup>several</sup> papers in your hands and  
that it might be left to be settled when I  
come in the Autumn. But do in the matter  
as seems best to you - as ever  
believe me affectionately Yours  
Robert