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Another Letter from Albertus C. Van Raalte Appeared in De Hope On This Date

A. C. Van Raalte

Simone Kennedy

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August 16, 1866

Holland, Michigan

1542

Another letter from Albertus C. Van Raalte appeared in *De Hope* on this date. It is an extract from a letter, undated, received by the family.

He reported that serious cholera epidemic was in progress. He was traveling around and preaching but because of a throat ailment he had to rest and keep quiet "which is often more difficult to do than working." He is enjoying his contacts with the Kampen seminar. The school has fifty students and is supported well by about 250 congregations.

He mentions in this letter as in a previous letter that war was imminent. Possibly the Prussians will rise against Napoleon, king of France. [The Franco-Prussian War occurred in 1870.]

In Dutch. Translation by Simone Kennedy.

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friends who ask after us, especially the church council and the Ministers who preach in my place. . . . May God our Lord keep you and bring us together again at His time in good health.

De Hope, 16 August 1866
Letter from Dr. van Raalte
 (Extract)
 [letter itself undated]

By God's grace we are doing well, and we appreciate that more and more as we see the fast and fatal effects of cholera all around us. Where that destructive pestilence breath[es] in the morning, often at night a burial takes place. Modern theology bans religion, and the fights and quarrels among those who defend the truth paralyze the influence of religion in the Netherlands tremendously. But the cholera epidemic, which takes lives so quickly, has a big impact on people's feeling of comfort and their consciences. They search for prayer meetings. We hope, yes, trust, that the dark clouds will produce dew and rain.

Last week I traveled and preached in the comfortable and roomy church of the Rev. Beukers²⁵ in Rotterdam, a new building in that same Hoveniers-lane that was transformed to a broad street by the government. At this moment they also have two sizable Christian schools. It was a great pleasure to be there. I had promised to lead the prayer service in a church in Amsterdam on Tuesday, but rheumatic particles in my body attached to my throat and prevented me from doing this, it forced me to return to Kampen and keep quiet—which is often more difficult to do than working.

The annual exam of the School in Kampen took place this week. Not all trustees were assembled, since most of them struggle with cholera in their churches, yet there was a quorum and they did proceed. Because of the illness of my throat I was only able to attend the second day of

²⁵Henricus Beuker (1834-1900) was the pastor at the Rotterdam church, 1864-67. He was born in Bentheim, Germany, and trained at the *Theologische Universiteit*, Kampen, receiving his degree and being ordained in 1862. He also served pastorates in the Netherlands—Zwolle (1862-64), Giessendam (1867-69), Harlingen (1869-73), Amsterdam (1873-81), and Leiden (1884-93), and the *Altreformierte Kirche* in Emlichheim, Germany (1881-84)—before emigrating to the US, where he served Allen Avenue CRC, Muskegon, Michigan, 1893-94. He was a member of the faculty at Calvin Theological Seminary, 1894-1900 (Harms, *Historical Directory*, 150; de Haas, *Gedenkt uw Voorgangers*, 35-36).

the examination of the nine students who have now become Ministers. There were some among them whom I highly respected, not only because of their knowledge and talents, but even more because of their Christian knowledge and spirit. It was such a pleasure to see the straightforwardness, the seriousness and the quality of their education. Many of the graduates are around 30 years old. When I consider the personnel at the School in Kampen, I am again convinced that the Separatist Churches are well able to provide the School with the most desirable professors for their students. In this respect the future is hopeful. O, may God's Spirit be poured out on this well-prepared, earnest and inspired host of Servants of God. That is what the churches should pray for, if they were serious in this matter. It was a day full of thanksgiving and joy.

There are approximately 50 students, who pay just over 50 guilders in tuition annually. The churches, around 250 in total, support the School by taking offerings twice a year, and you understand that, even when offerings are moderate, there is abundant money to cover the expenses of this small enterprise. That which exists, exists without any special effort. The churches do not consider this their life's goal. If their hearts and hands had been more involved, this trampled and despised people could have done much more, because in spite of their deficiencies they have the most magnificent construction workers in their midst.

I hope that there will still be a time of peace before a general war breaks out, partly because we would rather not be threatened by private wars on the sea.²⁶ I do not think that the Prussians will rise up against Napoleon. And what else can an exhausted Italy do than beg Napoleon to give back Venice? Italy is like a fly in Napoleon's spider's web. It is through God's grace that everything that is bent or crooked will eventually lead to a delightful end. The promises of God's Kingdom are like shining stars for us. No matter how terrible God's judgments are, they are still a joy to the soul because of their goal: that the people on earth will learn how to glorify God honor and praise.

We have had three cold and wet weeks. The hay and harvest were in danger. But the last couple of days it was dry and warm, which saved a lot. The harvest looks still great. But the heat, they say, stimulates the spread of cholera . . . Give our kind regards to our friends and brothers. God keep us and bring us safely together again!

²⁶ War seemed imminent, though the Franco-Prussian War did not break out until 1870.

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Albertus C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps Jr.,
1857 to 1875

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