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Van Raalte Papers

11-13-1869

A Letter of A. C. Van Raalte to His Son, Ben

A. C. Van Raalte

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Recommended Citation

Van Raalte, A. C., "A Letter of A. C. Van Raalte to His Son, Ben" (1869). *Van Raalte Papers: 1860-1869*. 531. https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/vrp_1860s/531

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New York, November 13, 1869

A letter of A. C. Van Raalte to his son, Ben, asking him to obtain property on which peach pits can be disposed, *planted*.

Original in the Archives of Calvin College

Translated.

(Apparently this letter reveals ACVR's intent to make the Pt. Superior farm productive by raising peaches.)

Ca.
New York

November 13, 1869

Mr. Benjamin Van Raalte

Dear Benjamin:

Dirk wrote me that you intended to write. Well, your good intention is already pleasant to me. I answered him, however, that the one who always does immediately what is to be done lives and performs doubly. Hence never procrastinate!

I know that you have already adopted the easy and profitable life of not postponing that which is to be done, but that you do it immediately. And I have observed this with joy.

Therefore, I do not wish to dally concerning a matter about which I should have written - namely to ask you to prepare for me a field of high-lying land for peach pits (seeds). I prefer to do this project in company with you. I have spoken to Cornelius and will instruct him per letter to purchase peach pits (seeds). It is necessary to plow deep and fertilize heavily. In three years they are rid of it.¹ If you prefer not to go into partnership with me, then I promise you thirty dollars per year, over and above the cost for your work, the fertilizer and the fencing.

Perhaps you will say, "Why do I insist on this so strongly?" Well, on sandy soil the heat consumes and the frost destroys. On low-lying, heavy soil they freeze out. That is why I want heavy, up-land soil.

I need these peaches not simply for personal use, (although the need of them for personal use is already so great that it would not be wise to buy peaches).

¹The significance of this statement is not clear.

You know, however, that through the gift of a Luyderm?¹ the college property is now secure² and I see a chance of making this property profitable through some help from people here in the East. This can be a noble basis for the security and growth of our young institutions.³ Such work for our institutions would please me more than the continuation of the solicitation of past seasons. Surely that (the solicitation) is a great work, but (in the way I suggested) I can obtain money too and remain at home in doing so. Furthermore, I can make the place (city) more attractive and cause the institutions to grow more.

I have thought about this for years. Now that the real estate has been made secure or safe through this gift I have more interest in the project than ever before. And that is why I hope that you will not refuse me, but will give me firm assistance.

I should like to begin with this project in the spring, the Lord willing. Keep these matters to yourself and to Dirk, because I do not like to have people observing me at close range. Let them see things as they come to pass, but no sooner. When at last success is in sight then they want to help.

I know full well that you can not have the same emotions or interest in this matter which I have. But this is true too, however, that one gradually becomes more interested in such matters. And do not think that doing this will prove to be your loss, because, first of all by the goodness of God, I am still able to repay you doubly. Moreover, everything which we do for honorable causes ennobles our character and gives us more enjoyment in life. In addition to all this, general interests (especially the great and tender ones) which are strengthened produce the greatest indirect profits or benefits. Such institutions make property values rise. They promote the growth of a community. They create markets and life. They attract capital and the best kind of inhabitants to such a place.

¹The spelling is very unclear.

²Apparently Van Raalte refers to financial conditions here. The property is paid for, evidently.

³The reference is to Hope Academy and Hope College.

Imagine for a moment - of how much capital would this place have been deprived annually if the educational work of late years had not been promoted? What would our characters be worth? What would real estate prices be? But in addition to all this - my mind might be engaged in noble pursuits: my interest, my desires - yes, indeed my powers of heart and soul might be devoted to their Creator, to Jesus' kingdom, to the advancement of fellow-men on earth and to the uplift of my loved ones - which I desire above all.

Do not believe the mounting lie or falsehood that you would become poor through this proposed course of action. Gold (money) alone destroys and impoverishes - yes, makes one miserable amid all the material things.

Now, my child, inform me by return mail what your answer is. Having committed you to God's grace, I remain

Your dear loving father

(w.s.) A.C. Van Raalte

Calvin C.

New York

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Saydon. *more likely*

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(w.s.) A.C. Van Raalte

C. C. C.

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