## Esteemed Sir and Friend!

We were very happy to receive your letter of December 30, 1879, in good health, and to learn from it that all of you are well, and also about the 93 year old mother-in-law Middelkoop who is no more. My wife read in the Pella Weekly No. 7, which we had received, about the death of the widow K. Middelkoop at age 93 which news came from W. Middelkoop. In a later Weekly, No. 13, we read that your dear wife was ill. We certainly hope and wish that by God's goodness she may be spared for you and her loved ones.

You write that we are not getting old but we are old of which I am reminded daily since so many of our former contemporaries have died.

Haarde Heer en Friend.

For instance, the following acquaintenances of yours died last year: Gerrit Slob Azn and Wouter Houweling Slob. My father-in-law C. Slob and the cripple W. Slob are both doing well at a little over 87 years, and also A. Donk, A. van Karsen, C. de Jong, and C. Wallaard.

Well, my friend, you surely would see a lot of changes if you could see Hoogblokland and Hoornaar and the surrounding towns. The church and tower have been demolished and are being totally rebuilt. The school which was enlarged a few years ago no longer complied with the requirements of the Education Act. The school in Hoornaar was condemned so that now a new school with three rooms for 44 children each (without the teacher) is being built with a house close to the old school which was contracted out for about *f*16,000, which to my thinking is somewhat excessive since the population of our municipality has hardly increased.

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Work on the railroad connection between Dordrecht, Gorcum Elst is in full swing from Schelluinen Gorcum Arkel past the house of Mrs. van Hoei of 't Schoonzicht near the main road, and then through the Mangelkamppe to Leerdam. Many very good farms have been expropriated and made useless as a result. Well friend, that is a costly undertaking since all that farmland has been expropriated for f5,000 to f10,000 per hectare while a lot of owners are not too happy because there is such a great need for land in the Netherlands and while those farmlands are very valuable I can also inform you that cheese of this spring is being bought for f30 to f31.50 per 50 half kilos.

Your brother-in-law Middelkoop is doing very well; he continues to live very quietly and finds great enjoyment in his beautiful garden.

Los with Frederik Stol work in Mo centerks Frack ander Meer

Also [doing well is] Frederik Slob, who lives in Meerkerksbroek near Meerkerk with his son-in-law B. Kok. He is a good, pleasant man who has rented his farm out to a son of Jan de Heer in de Lage Giessen since his children do not need it, and he moved with the daughter of his first marriage, Zwaantje, to the area near Meerkerk since his other daughter Aartje was married [and living] in the same area.

Please be so kind as to greet Mr. I. Overkamp; his daughter and son-in-law and his brothers-in-law in Noordeloos are doing very well, but Jan was not very lucky with his children since last year his eldest son drowned while drunk.

Rumor has it that the wife of Rev. Koopman is traveling to the Netherlands to see her elderly mother and other relatives. I, my wife and children send you our amiable greetings. Your loving friend,

E. Aanen

Translated from the Dutch by Gerrit W. Sheeres, Grand Rapids, MI

Horman den Vet. 1881.

Hoornaar, October 1881

Dear Sir and Friend,

It was with a great deal of pleasure and being in good health that we received your letter of June 23 1880, 26 April and 16 September, last, from which we learned that you are doing well at the age of more than 81 years. And also that your wife, Hendrika Middelkoop continues to struggle with ill health, but that according to your letter you find in her a treasure which excels all earthly treasures. We are grateful to God that we are all well and thriving, although I am troubled considerably by nervousness which prevents me from taking care of my previous commitments such as being a member of the municipal council, my polder duties and as business manager of absentee owners. When it was time to retire from the first one last July, I requested not to be considered again, and my son Duur Kornelis was chosen unanimously to be a member of the municipal council. I still take care of the last two commitments

but my son Duur assists me.

The Council consists today almost entirely of the next generation so that big changes have taken place in municipal matters. This is mainly the result of the new Education Act which obligates the municipality to renovate the school which consists of three rooms of which two are used for teaching by the principal In 't Veld and an assistant lady teacher who receives f600 per year salary, while the principal receives f800. This caused the personal assessment to increase from f400 to f800 for 1881; however, because of debt reduction it had to be doubled again; but the Council has found an answer for this by suspending the Civil Poverty Board and giving the financial resources to the municipality so that the poor who are not members of the church will be supported by the Municipal treasury. Since no tuition is paid, the more well- to-do citizens found it somewhat unreasonable to pay those from

[top line missing]] while the Poor Fund can easily do this since it has about f80,000 on hand and therefore the personal assessment for 1882 has been set again at f400.

The Council Chamber which was still at the home of the late Jacob de Bruyn will be moved to the old school as per January 1, 1882 which now has been remodeled into the City Hall.

In your letter of 26 April, last, you wrote that F. de Leeuw lives in the Pella area. I am sure that you must have been adequately informed about him; still I feel I should warn you to have as little to do with him as possible since he is a rude, dangerous person. I cannot tell you the grief and shame he has caused his in-laws, and the family was happy to see him leave for far away America.

Two weeks ago I visited your brother-in-law, W. Middelkoop, together with my wife and granddaughter Jaantje Hakkesteegt, and we spent a most enjoyable day there.

10 hoon de vorege winder een Wein Keteld in ye schon ven van 23 9u

[He is doing well] although last winter he had some health problems. You asked in your letter of June 23, 1880 about his religious convictions. He fully accepts the teaching of grace through Jesus, but is not a church member. He is a friend of Rev. Groeneveld of Hoogblokland who is a true conservative person and is the counselor of our congregation. He was at odds with our school principal, Mr. A. A. in 't Veld, who is our church janitor and precentor (worship leader) in our worship services. The reason was that this minister had made some biting comments in his preaching and the schoolteacher (being a liberal) had taken offense, ves, had even caused some commotion; this led to some people asking the consistory to dismiss the teacher as our precentor; however a tie vote prevented this, but resulted in a temporary release pending a decision of the Classis of Dordrecht; after having listened to the teacher and the consistory and having heard a confession of guilt on the part of the teacher as well as his plea for forgiveness, he was reappointed to his old position with the unanimous approval of the consistory, but against Rev. Groeneveld's will. My father-in-law, C. Slob, and the crippled W. Slob, both well over 88 ½ years of age, are in good health yet, but A. Donk, formerly the municipal treasurer, passed away last year.

Translated from the Dutch by Gerrit W. Sheeres, Grand Rapids, MI

Hoornaar, 17 March 1883

Dear Sir!

It was good to receive your letters of 12 and 26 April 1882 in good health, as well as yours of the 27 of February of this year, in which we once again learned that you are well, that many in your family have been brought to his kingdom through the grace of Jesus, but also that your dear wife remains sickly; may she bear her suffering patiently, may she acknowledge and confess that the troubles in this life are the result of our sin, and may she take refuge alone in Jesus and out of free grace, without our being entitled, seek (*illegible word*) unto eternal life for the glory of the name of the Lord.

We read your letter of April 26, 1882 often and we have read it to various friends of Hoornaar and

Hoogblokland. All of us admire your clear mind and memory at the age of 81, and we noticed quite clearly that you have not forgotten your earlier involvement in our municipalities - God be praised that Holland was liberated from the French yoke and thus far has remained a free land. I thank you for that letter which I save carefully.

None of the persons who were members of the municipal council when you left Hoornaar in 1849 is still alive, they have all died, except you and Father. What a privilege. Today we have an entirely new council with Lotzij Burgma, J.W. de Klerk (son-in-law of the crippled W. S. Slob) and H. Slob (son of B.Slob Cz) aldermen J. Heer, A. de Jong (son of C. de Jong), A. Donk, son of A. Donk, D.K. Aanen, and B. Slob (son of G. Slob Cz), council members I. van Liersum, Sec., and P. Donk the eldest son of A. Donk who was elected

municipal treasurer in the place of his Father. The decision of the Council taken in the year 1881 to suspend the General Poverty Board and to deposit the revenues of the possessions in the municipal treasury to look after the poor while the properties were not to be bought by the municipality, has been voided by the Provincial Executive; the majority of the Council was not happy with this decision and about a year ago it was sent to His Majesty the King, but all of us are surprised that we have not yet received a decisive answer.

As far as the church is concerned, there is a lot of turmoil also in our congregation. Since our congregation has been vacant for about two years and having repeatedly called Reformed ministers but in vain, the church council in consultation with the Church Governing Board, just like the congregations of Noordeloos [and] Otteland,

[line missing] [having sought] the help of the Reformed Association of Friends of the Truth, asked for permission to use a speaker of that association as long as we are vacant: this was granted. The interest of our congregation, just as elsewhere (with the exception of a few modernists), has been beyond expectation. This association has at the moment about 15 or 16 men who were converted and are sent out to counteract modernism; this has been supported greatly by professor Kuipers. If it is the Lord's work it will be blessed. Grandfather C. Slob died toward the end of May 1882 at a little over 89 years of age; his neighbor C(?) de Jong also and his cousin/nephew, the cripple W. Slob, who died having reached the age of a month shy of 90. Tomas de Leeuw does not show any improvement in his health, just like in the olden days he still walks around in a fog, does not have a fixed address but stays usually where the beggars live.

Two weeks ago I visited your brother-in-law, W. Middelkoop, for a cup of tea; his housekeeper Mietje complained about arthritis; they live very quietly and respectably; they usually stay home; he is a friend of Rev. Groeneveld who says he has been converted [although he is peculiar in his manners, while your brother-in-law does not dare to appropriate the faith for himself; may the Lord grant light to that dark heart so that his Name may be glorified.]<sup>1</sup>

Translated from the Dutch by Gerrit W. Sheeres, Grand Rapids, MI

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Bracketed portion is a translation of the sideways margin writing on the previous page