

Letter 073
Isleworth, 18 August 1876

My dear Theo,

Yesterday, I went to see Gladwell, who is home for a few days. A terrible blow has struck them, his young sister, so full of life, with dark eyes and hair, had fallen from a horse at Blackheath; they found her unconscious and she died five hours later, without regaining consciousness. She was seventeen years old. As soon as I heard the news, I went to see them, knowing that Gladwell was home. I left at eleven o'clock; and had a long walk to Lewisham. I crossed London from one end to the other and didn't arrive at my destination until almost five o'clock.

They had all just come back from the funeral; the whole household was in mourning.

I was happy to have come, but confused, truly upset by the spectacle of a pain so great and so venerable. "Blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that sorrow, but always rejoice, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are those that find love on their road, who are bound together by God, for to them all things will work together for their good."

I chatted for a long time, until evening, with Harry, about everything, the kingdom of God, the Bible; we chatted further, we walked up and down the station platform. Never will we forget the moments before we said goodbye.

He and I, we know each other intimately; his work is mine, I know as well as he the people that he knows down here, their lives are as mine. From him, I have been given an urge to dive into the history of this family; I love these people, more now that I know their history in detail, because now I can sympathize with them on their existence and style of life.

So then, we walked up and down the platform of the station, an ordinary world, but we were animated by thoughts that were not ordinary. Such moments do not last long, and soon we had to part.

From the train the view of London was beautiful, squatting in its gloom, with Saint Paul's and the other churches in the distance. I went by train to Richmond, and by foot to Isleworth, along the Thames. A fine walk. To the left, there are parks with their poplars, their oaks and gigantic elms; to the right, the river which reflects their images. The evening is fine, somewhat solemn. I got back home at quarter past ten.

Thanks for your last letter. You had not yet written that Mrs. V. was dead; how often I accompanied her home in the evening. How I should have liked to walk with you all to the Hoeve!

I often teach the boys Bible history, and last Sunday morning, I read the Bible with them. Every morning and evening we read the Bible and sing hymns and pray. And that is a good thing. We also go to Ramsgate. While these twenty-one boys of the London streets and markets pray Our Father, who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread, I imagine the cry of a young crow which the Lord hears, and it did me good to pray with them and to bow my head lower than they probably did at the words, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

I am still full of what happened yesterday. I wanted to console the father, but I felt embarrassed in front of him, although I was able to speak to the son. The atmosphere of that house was truly holy.

Have you ever read *A Life for a Life*, by the author of *John Halifax*?¹ I am sure you would like that. How is your English coming? It was delightful to take a long walk once more; here at school they walk very little. When I think of my life full of struggle in Paris last year and compare it with this, where I sometimes do not get out-of-doors the whole day – at least not farther than the garden – I sometimes wonder; When shall I come back to that other world? If I go back to it, it will probably be doing other work than last year. But I think I like teaching Bible history to the boys better than walking; one feels more or less safe in doing the former. And now kind regards to Roos and to anybody who may ask after me. A handshake in thought and best wishes from

Your loving brother, Vincent

Enclosed is a letter for Mauve which you may read. I think it is right not to forget one's former acquaintances, therefore I occasionally write to some of them, also to Soek in Paris and others.

I write between school hours and rather in a hurry as you can see; if you can persuade somebody to read Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life* and Felix Holt, you will be doing a good deed. The former is so splendid!

1. Dinah Maria Mulock, later Mrs. Craik.