

Letter 572
Arles, 19 January 1889

My dear Theo,

I must write you a line again today. Yesterday they again presented the gas bill for 10 francs (or 9.90), which I also paid. That again increases the account which I made out for you in my last letter, and reduces what was left of the 50-franc note for my food to very little. If you could send me something more, I have explained it all clearly enough, I hope. I am still very weak, and I shall have difficulty in getting my strength back if the cold continues. Rey will give me quinine wine, which will have the right effect, I think. I still have a lot to tell you in reply to your letter, but I have a picture on the easel and am in a hurry. You didn't tell me that André B. had been married before. Jo sent me a note in reply to my congratulation, it is very kind of her.

It always seemed to me that you owed it to your social position and to the position you have in the family to get married, and besides, for a number of years it has been our mothers' wish too.

And by thus doing what you ought to do, you will perhaps have more peace, even amidst a thousand and one difficulties, than before.

All the same, life is not easy for me either.

What wouldn't I have given to be able to spend a day here with you and show you the work in progress, and the house, etc., etc.

Now I should have preferred your seeing nothing of what I have here to your having carried away an impression of it under such distressing conditions. That's that.

What is Guillaumin doing? You know he has a son now. Bernard is more and more bothered by his father. That house is becoming more and more of a hell. And the worst of it is there is not much one can do; if you put your head into it, you put it into a regular viper's nest. They, Gauguin and Bernard, are now going to try to get Bernard exempted from service on account of a narrowness of the chest. All right – but it would be a thousand times better for him to do his service decently in Algiers with Milliet.

Milliet will be starting to think me a fool, for he keeps on asking me for news of him.

Roulin is on the point of leaving. His pay here was 135 francs a month, to bring up three children on that and live on it, himself and his wife!

You can imagine what it has been. And that's not all, the increase is a remedy worse than the disease itself... What a Government... and what times we are living in! As for me, I have rarely seen a man of Roulin's temperament, there is something in him tremendously like Socrates, ugly as a satyr, as Michelet called him, "until on the last day a god appeared in him that illuminated the Parthenon." If Chatrian, whom you met, had seen that man! Write me at once, please, for what you have sent was not really quite enough, as I have tried to explain to you with the utmost clearness.

Ever yours, Vincent

I forgot to mention that yesterday I had a letter from Gauguin again about the masks and fencing gloves, full of diverse and diversified projects, and he already sees the end of his journey on the horizon. Naturally...

He is already afraid of not being able to go to Brussels for that reason. And after that, if he cannot even go to Brussels, how is he to go to Denmark and the tropics?

The best thing he could still do, and the very thing he will not do, would be quite simply to return here.

But we have not got to that yet, for he does not say that he sees bankruptcy on the horizon, though it is more than visible between the lines.

He is still temporarily at the Schuffeneckers', and is going to do the portraits of the whole family, so he still has time to think it over.

I have not answered him. Fortunately one thing is certain, I dare say that basically Gauguin and I are by nature fond enough of each other to be able to begin again together if necessary. I am very pleased that you have not forgotten the "Anatomy Lesson" for M. Rey. In the future I shall always need a doctor from time to time, and just because he knows me well now, it would be another reason for me to stay quietly here.

I will write to you again soon, but as for the month's money, draw your own conclusions, my net expenditure will not be more than any other month.