

My dear Theo,

Thank you for your letter; though I wrote you only yesterday, I am answering at once.

I have never worked with more calm than in my last canvases – I hope you will receive some at the same time as this letter.

For the moment I am overcome with discouragement, but since this attack was over in a week, what's the use of thinking that it may in fact come back again? First of all you do not know, and cannot foresee, how or in what form. Therefore let's go on with the work as long as it is possible, as if nothing had happened. I shall soon have an opportunity to go out when the weather is not too cold and then I have rather set my heart on trying to finish the work I have begun here.

I must do some more canvases of cypresses and mountains to give an idea of Provence.

The "Ravine" [F 662, JH 1804] and another canvas of mountains, with a road in the foreground are typical of it.

And the "Ravine" especially, which I still have here because it is not dry. And the view of the park, too, with the pines. It has taken me all my time to observe the character of pines, cypresses, etc., in the pure air here, lines which do not alter and which you will find again at every step.

It is perfectly true that last year the attack returned various times – but then also it was precisely by working that my normal condition returned little by little. It will probably be the same this time. So behave as if nothing had happened for we can do absolutely nothing.

And what would be definitely worse would be to let myself slip into the same condition as my companions in misfortune, who do nothing all day, week, month, year, as I have told you many times, and have also repeated to M. Salles, urging him strongly never to recommend this asylum.

My work at least lets me retain a little of my clarity of mind, and makes possible my getting rid of this someday.

Just now some pictures are ripe in my head, I see in advance the places that I still want to do in these months. Why should I change the means of expression?

Once away from here – let's suppose so – we must really see if something can be done with my canvases. I should have a certain number of mine, a certain number of others, and perhaps I should try to do a bit of business.

I do not know yet, but I see no reason for not doing some more canvases here, which I shall need when I leave here. Once more, I can foresee absolutely nothing, I see no way out, but I also see that my stay here cannot go on indefinitely. Then, so as to do nothing in a hurry, not to break off abruptly, I would like to go on as usual while I am here.

Yesterday I sent two canvases to Marseilles, that is to say, I made a present of them to my friend Roulin: a white house among the olives [F 664, JH 1865], and a wheat field with a background of lilac mountains and a black tree, as in the big canvas I sent you. And I gave Mr. Salles a little canvas with some pink and red geraniums against a background all black [lost], just like some I did at one time in Paris.

As for the money you sent me, 10 francs of it was due M. Peyron because he had advanced it to me last month; I had given 20 francs in New Year's presents and I took 10 of it for the postage for the canvases and other expenses, so there still remain 10 francs in cash.

Just now I have done a little portrait of one of the servants here, which he wanted to send to his mother. That means I have already started working again, and if he saw any objection, Mr. Peyron would probably not have let me do it. What he said to me was – "Let's hope that there will be no recurrence" – exactly the same thing as ever; he spoke very kindly to me, and as for him, these things hardly surprise him, but since there is no quick remedy, perhaps only time and circumstances can have any influence.

I should very much like to go to Arles again, not immediately, but toward the end of February, for instance, first of all to see my friends again, which always refreshes me, and then to test whether I am capable of risking the journey to Paris.

I'm very glad that our sister has come. Kind regards to her and Jo, and as for you and me, don't let's worry. In any case, it did not last as long as last year and so we can still hope that little by little it will pass in the course of time.

Well, be of good heart, a hearty handshake.

Ever yours,

Vincent