

My dear Theo,

I have to thank you for a lot of things, first for your letter and the 50-fr. note enclosed, but also just as much for the package of paints and canvas, which I have been to the station to get (the geranium lake has come too), and lastly for the Cassagne book, and for La Fin de Lucie Pellegrin.

If Tasset divided his parcels better, it would make a difference in the cost of carriage; there were three parcels this time, two of them weighing more than 5 kilos. If he had kept back a few tubes, the whole would have cost about 5 francs. But I am very glad to have them all the same.

Lucie Pellegrin is very fine, it is quick with life and is still exquisite and moving, because it keeps the human touch. Why should it be forbidden to handle these subjects, unhealthy and overexcited sexual organs seek sensual delights such as da Vinci's. Not I, who have hardly seen anything but the kind of women at 2 francs, originally intended for the Zouaves. But the people who have leisure for love-making, they want the da Vinci mysteries. I realize that these loves are not for everyone's understanding. But from the point of view of what is allowed, one could write books treating worse aberrations of perversion than Lesbianism, just as it would be permissible to write medical documents on this sort of story, surgical disquisitions.

At all events, law and justice apart, a pretty woman is a living marvel, whereas the pictures by da Vinci and Correggio only exist for other reasons. Why am I so little an artist that I always regret that the statue and the picture are not alive? Why do I understand the musician better, why do I see the *raison d'être* of his abstractions better?

At the first opportunity I will send you an engraving after a drawing by Rowlandson, representing two women, as beautiful as a Fragonard or a Goya. Just now we are having a glorious strong heat, with no wind, just what I want. There is a sun, a light that for want of a better word I can only call yellow, pale sulphur yellow, pale golden citron. How lovely yellow is! And how much better I shall see the North!

Oh! I keep wishing for the day when you will see and feel the sun of the South!

As to studies, I have two studies of thistles in an uncultivated field, thistles white with the fine dust of the road [F 447, JH 1560; F 447a, JH 1551]. Then a little study of a roadside inn, with red and green carts [F 445, JH 1554]; and also a little study of Paris-Lyons-Mediterranée carriages [F 446, JH 1553]; these last two studies have been approved of as having "quite the modern touch" by the young rival of good old General Boulanger, the very resplendent 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant of Zouaves.

This valiant warrior has given up the art of drawing, into the mysteries of which I endeavored to initiate him, but it was for a plausible reason, namely that he had unexpectedly to take an examination, for which I am afraid he was anything but prepared.

Always supposing the aforesaid young Frenchman always speaks the truth, he has astonished his examiners by the confidence of his answers, a confidence he had reinforced by spending the eve of the examination in a brothel. As François Coppée, I think, says in a sonnet, one might have "a despairing doubt" on the subject of "my lieutenant to be," for, Coppée goes on, "my thoughts are on our defeat." The fact remains that I have nothing to complain of in him, and if it is true that he will shortly be a full-fledged lieutenant, one must anyhow acknowledge his luck. He is literally like the good old general in that he has often frequented the pretty ladies of the so-called *café-chantant* type. It will be enough for me to write you, or rather he will send you a wire telling you by what train he will arrive on the 16th or 17th. Then he will hand over the painted studies, which will save us the cost of carriage. He owes me all that anyhow for my lessons. He will only stay in Paris one or two days, as he is going North, but on his return he will stop there longer.

After such coolness it is rather kind of Uncle to have left you a legacy, but I cannot easily get it into my head that C. M. and he did not actually condemn you to penal servitude for life that time they refused to lend you the capital necessary to set you up in business for yourself. This will always remain a grave error on their part. But I won't harp on that. All the more reason for trying to do the utmost in art, even if we shall always be in comparatively straitened circumstances as far as money is concerned. Well, my boy, at the time you were ready for your part to set up in business, and consequently you have a perfect right to feel that you are doing your duty for your part. Considered as a whole, you have taken up this business of the impressionists with their help. Without their help the thing can't go on; or will go on in some different way. If you have made no profit yet, you have deserved something, and if the Dutch confound these two very different things, having only their word "verdiene" for both meanings, so much the worse for them.

I am writing a line to Mourier too – you can read it – and I give you a hearty handshake.

Ever yours, Vincent

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With regard to Gauguin, however much we appreciate him, I think that we must behave like the mother of a family and calculate the actual expenses. If one listened to him, one would go on hoping for something vague in the future, and meantime stay on at the inn, and go on living in a hell with no way out.

I would rather shut myself up in a cloister like the monks, free as the monks are to go to the brothel or the wine shop if the spirit moves us. But for our work we need a home. Altogether Gauguin leaves me quite in the dark about Pont-Aven; he tacitly accepts my suggestion of coming to him if necessary, but he writes nothing about any means of finding a studio of our own, or about what it would cost to furnish it. And I can't help feeling there's something queer about it.

So I have decided not to go to Pont-Aven, unless we could find a house there at a low rent like the one here (15 fr. per month is what mine costs) and could arrange it so that we could sleep in it.

I am going to write our sister this evening if I can find time.

A handshake. Vincent

Have you got the drawings of the gardens, and the two figure drawings? I think that the picture of the old peasant's head is as strange in colour as the Sower, but the Sower is a failure, and the peasant is more what it should be. Oh, as to that – I will send it to you all by itself as soon as it is dry, and I am going to put a dedication to you on it.