

My dear Theo,

The reason I am writing you a second time today is that I am enclosing a few words for our friend Gauguin; as I felt my calm returning these last days, it seemed to me sufficient so that my letter would not turn out to be absolutely ridiculous; besides, if you over-refine scruples of respect or sentiment, it is not certain that you gain in courtesy or common sense. That being so, it does one good to talk to the other fellows again even at a distance.

And you, old man, how are things going? Write me a few lines one of these days, for I think that the emotions which must seize the future father of a family, the emotions which our good father so liked to talk about, in your case as in his, must be great and fine, but are for the moment rather beyond your expressing in the rather incoherent medley of the petty vexations of Paris. After all, realities of this kind must be like a good mistral, not very caressing but purifying. I assure you it is a great pleasure to me too, and will contribute much to relieving me of my mental fatigue and, perhaps, of my indifference. After all, it is something to get back one's interest in life, when I think that I am about to pass into the state of an uncle to this boy planned by your wife. I find it very funny that she feels so sure it is a boy, but that remains to be seen.

Anyway, meanwhile the only thing I can do is plod a little at my pictures. I have one going of a moonrise over the same field as the sketch in Gauguin's letter, but in it some stacks take the place of the wheat. It is dull yellow-ochre and violet [F 735, JH 1761]. Anyway, you will see it in a short time. I am also working on a new one with ivy.

Above all, old man, I beg you not to fret or be worried or unhappy about me; the idea you might get into your head of this necessary and salutary quarantine would have little justification when we need a slow and patient recovery. If we can manage that, we will save our strength for next winter. Here I imagine the winter must be very dismal. Anyway, I must try to occupy myself all the same. I often think that next winter I might retouch a lot of last year's studies from Aries. So just lately, having kept back a big study of an orchard which had given me great difficulty (it is the same orchard you will find a variant of but very vague, in the package), I set myself to work it over again from memory, and I have found the way to express the harmony of the tones more strongly.

Tell me, have you received those drawings of mine? I sent you half a dozen once by parcel post and ten or so later on. If by chance you have not received them yet they must have been lying at the station for weeks on end. The doctor here said to me about Monticelli that he always thought him an eccentric, but that as for madness, he had only been a little that way toward the end. Considering all the misery of Monticelli's last years, is there any reason to be surprised that he gave way under too heavy a load, and has one any right to deduce from this that artistically speaking he fell short in his work?

I do not believe it, he had such a power of logical calculation and originality as a painter that it is still regrettable that he hadn't the stamina to make its flowering more complete.

I am sending you enclosed a sketch of the cicadas here [F 1445, JH 1765].

Their song in the great heat here has the same charm for me as the cricket on the heart for the peasants at home. Old man – don't let's forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives, and that we obey them without knowing it. If it is still hard for me to take courage again in spite of faults committed, and to be committed, which must be my cure, don't forget henceforth that neither our spleen nor our melancholy, nor yet our feelings of good nature or common sense, are our sole guides, and above all not our final protection and that if you too find yourself faced with heavy responsibilities to be risked if not undertaken, honestly, don't let's be too much concerned about each other, since it so happens that the circumstances of living in a state so far removed from our youthful conceptions of an artist's life must make us brothers in spite of everything, as we are in so many ways companions in fate. Things are so closely connected that here you sometimes find cockroaches in the food as if you were really in Paris; on the other hand, it may be that in Paris you sometimes catch a real feeling of the fields. It certainly is not much, but after all it is reassuring. So take your fatherhood as a good soul on our old heaths would take it, those heaths which, through all the noise, tumult and fogginess of the cities, still remain with us, inexpressibly dear – however timid our tenderness may be. That is to say, let this be your notion of fatherhood, exile and stranger and poor man that you are, and henceforth, find strength, with the instinct of the poor, in the probability of a real, real life of one's fatherland, a real life at least in memory, even though we may forget it every day. Sooner or later, such as it is, we meet our destinies, but certainly it would be a sort of hypocrisy if I were to forget all the good humour, the happy-go-lucky carelessness of the poor devils that we were, coming and going in this Paris that has become so strange, and to let it weigh us down out of proportion to our real load of cares.

Indeed, I am so glad that if there are sometimes cockroaches in the food here, you have your wife and child at home.

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Besides, it is cheering that Voltaire, for instance, has left us at liberty not to believe absolutely everything we imagine.

Thus, while sharing your wife's anxiety about your health, I am not going so far as to believe what now and then for a moment I imagined – namely that worry on my account was the cause of your comparatively long silence – though that is so easily explained when one realizes how her condition must occupy your mind. But it is quite all right, and it is the road that everyone must take in our world.

Good-bye for now and a good handshake for you and Jo.

Ever yours,  
Vincent

In haste, but I wanted not to delay sending the letter for old Gauguin, you surely have the address.