

Dear Mother,

To begin with, I want to congratulate you, though late, upon your birthday.

Twice already I started a letter, which I put away again, as my head did not feel like writing. How much I agree with you in seeking other surroundings after Cor's departure, for some time.

There was much news in your latest letters: first the particulars of Cor's departure, and further that you are going to move in November. I can understand that you prefer to be nearer your grandchildren. Yet it will be a strange feeling to think that none of us has stayed in Brabant.

I intend to send you a picture shortly, and one to Wil too; I am working on them and will surely have them ready by the end of the month. But it may still be a fortnight before they are dry enough to be sent off.

These last weeks I have been, as far as my health is concerned, quite well, and

I am working from morning till evening almost without interruption, day after day, and I lock myself up in the studio to have no distraction. Thus it is a great consolation for me that the work is progressing instead of declining, and that I do it with absolute calmness and that in this respect my thoughts are quite clear and conscious. And so, compared with others here who cannot do anything, I certainly have no reason to complain. Recently I wrote Theo that I should like to be less far away from Paris for a while, and probably something will come of this. Not that I am unwilling to yield my freedom for the sake of being less trouble to others when it becomes too bad, but for the moment it comes to about the same thing. And there are so many among the artists who – notwithstanding nervous diseases or epileptic fits from time to time – nevertheless go ahead, and in a painter's life it seems to be enough to make paintings, but also one has to be careful not to spoil one's connections with other painters. My health during the intervals is so good, and my stomach so much better than before, that I believe it will still take years before I am quite incapable, which I feared in the beginning would be the case immediately.

However, I fear I shall again find out in the course of time that not every procrastination is a thief of time when one has to do with illness. But there seems to be no rule for it, and the physician repeated to me several times that one cannot say anything about it beforehand. But if one knows that it is a chronic disease, you will understand that one, though absolutely perplexed in the beginning, gets used to the thought, and then considers what one can still do. And this might be even more than one expects.

In the beginning I was so dejected that I had no desire even to see my friends again and to work, and now the desire for these two things is stirring, and then there is the fact that one's appetite and health are perfect during the intervals. And I am so longing for Theo and his wife, whom I haven't even seen yet, and I am interested in everything. And when I think that this is no time for me to look for new friends, I think that much more of my present and former friends.

Yet I understand that I must not ponder this too deeply, as it may have to be settled quite differently than I sometimes imagine, and besides I do not cherish any definite desire. Only I am anything but patient when I am not feeling well, though I have a rather solid stock of patience for my work. But that is literally all.

As often as I have the chance, I work at portraits, which I myself sometimes think are better and more serious than the rest of my work. And if it might happen that my condition allows me to go back to Paris or its vicinity, that will probably be the important thing for me.

And now I say goodbye to you for today, forgive my not writing before, and I hope to send you the paintings I am making for you shortly. Embracing you in thought,

Your loving Vincent