

Letter 072  
Isleworth, 2 August 1876

My dear Theo,

I heard from Father that you intended to come home one day while Anna and Elizabeth were there; tell me if you did.

Yesterday Mr. Jones and his family came home. I had decorated the boys' dining room with a "Welcome Home" on the wall of holly and ivy, and large bouquets on the table. There is a lot of holly in the garden, and they have cut away all the branches from a few old trees; these are now full of young shoots, quite white or yellowish with an occasional pink leaf, and that is very beautiful. I gathered a large bunch of it to put on the table.

Mr. Jones asked me if I could tell him the price of fifty pounds of butter in Holland. If it is not too expensive, he intends to have it sent over from Holland regularly. Please ask Mrs. Roos how much it is, and write to me as soon as possible.

I suppose the boys will arrive soon now.

Have you ever read the story of Elijah and of Elisha carefully? I re-read them over the last few days and I am sending you an enclosure on what I have written on the subject. What a moving story it is! I similarly re-read in the Acts the story of Paul, when he found himself at the edge of the sea and everyone fell on his neck and kissed him. I was touched by this sentence of Paul: "God comforts the simple people."

It is God who made man and it is He who may enrich their lives with moments and times of life sublime, also with marvellous states of the soul.

The sea was made, the oak was made, but man, made in the image of his Father, is fairer than the sea. Nevertheless, the sea is beautiful; Mr. Stokes' home is infested with bugs, but the spectacle of the sea, contemplated from the window, is unforgettable.

The heart of a carnal man "sometimes succumbs to a violent desire" is the view of those who preach and work for Him, who has given them some sort of a baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire. Those, you see, their eyes weep again in sadness when they think of their youth and "to the good of those He quenched." Their sublime peace they have now is nevertheless worth more than their deceitful tranquillity of before, because tranquillity and real peace begin only from the moment where "there is nothing left in which to rest" and that "one no longer loves anything on earth, except God." They lament: "Woe is me!" and they beg: "Who will save me from this mortal body?"; it is perhaps the best age of their lives, and very glad are those that attain these high summits!

These are the cries that I have already heard twice. The first time, in Paris, from the pastor Bercier, fallen victim of an anguish caused by a huge physical pain which menaced him, cried: "Who will deliver me from this body!" in a tone which, I well know, made all those present in the church shudder. The second time, it was Father who pronounced these words (in his sermon, in April, when I was home), although he spoke in a very calm and more penetrating voice than usual, added (his face looked like that of an angel): "The blissful from above say: what you are now, we once were, and what we are now, you will be one day." Between father and those above, there is again a space of life, and there is even space between father and us. But Those who are above can make us brothers of father, they can also make us increasingly intimate one to the other. I wish that it is so, my boy, because you know how much I love you!

Yesterday I took a lovely walk along the Thames; on the other side there were beautiful country places and gardens. It was a sky such as Ruysdael or Constable would have painted.

A firm handshake, kind regards to Roos, and believe me,

Your loving brother, Vincent