

Dear Theo,

I received your last letter with the 180 fr. enclosed in good order; my heartfelt thanks for it.

I am very glad you liked the drawing I sent you; I think there really is something in it.

I wish you would have it put on a simple grey mount, for it will look best that way.

Further, I partly agree with you in what you say about the aspect of some drawings having something which can best be compared to an eau-forte non ébarbée [unpolished copperplate etching]. However, I believe that this peculiar effect in drawings, which I think the connoisseurs rightly appreciate, is caused more by a peculiar tremor of the hand when working under emotion than by the material one uses (of course, with etchings it is different – there it is caused by the barbe, burr, of the plate). Among my studies I myself have a few which look rather like what I shall call non ébarbée. If I have not fixed your drawing, or have worked on it again here and there after having fixed it, so that there are spots with an unpleasant shine, just pour a large glass of milk, or water and milk, over it and let it dry; you will see that it gives a peculiar saturated black, much more effective than is generally seen in a pencil drawing. To get that peculiar look, non ébarbée, I think one ought not to use crayon but rather charcoal which has been soaked in oil.

Of course I sent the 25 guilders to Mr. Tersteeg at once, and have received a receipt for it without one written word. He may talk about being “hurt,” but I wish he would only consider how hurt I must have felt, always hearing such things as, “You do not earn your living, you have lost your rights,” and I don’t know what else. Such things really don’t hurt less but infinitely more than what I said to him – such things sometimes pierce the heart and deeply grieve the soul.

But what’s the use of talking about it any more?

As to his buying or not, I consider that quite different, quite separate from personal disputes or differences of view on some subjects; I should think whether or not he buys from me would depend not on me but on my work. Let him buy my work (as I make more progress) or not buy it because he either does or doesn’t like it. He may buy it for himself or another, but it is not exactly fair to let a personal antipathy influence one’s judgement, or, on the other hand, to let the personal charm of some artist influence one into overlooking faults in his work.

There certainly is an affinity between a person and his work, but it is not easy to define what this affinity is, and on that question many judge quite wrongly.

And now, yes, I know that Mother is ill, and I know many other sad things besides, either in our own family or in others’.

And I am not insensible to it, and I don’t think I should be able to draw “Sorrow” if I didn’t feel it. But since last summer it has become clear to me that the disharmony between Father, Mother and myself has become a chronic evil because there has been misunderstanding and estrangement between us for too long a time. And now it has gone so far that we must suffer for it on both sides.

I mean, we might have helped each other more if long ago we had tried on both sides to live in closer understanding and to share weal and woe, always remembering that parents and children must remain one. We didn’t make these mistakes on purpose, and for the greater part they must be ascribed to the force majeure of difficult circumstances and a hurried life. Now I have become little more than a half strange, half tiresome person to Father and Mother; and for my part, when I’m at home, I also have a lonesome, empty feeling. Opinions and professions differ so much that we unintentionally annoy each other, but I repeat, it is quite involuntary. This is a very sad feeling, but life and the world are full of such unsatisfactory relationships, and it really does more harm than good to reproach each other – sometimes the best thing to do in such a case is to avoid each other. But I don’t know what’s best; I wish I did.

Well, Father and Mother find comfort in their work and I in mine. For, brother, in spite of all the little miseries, I work with great animation.

I have just received a letter from Rappard; I have been “en froid” with him for some time, but now we are interested in each other’s work again. Probably he will come to see me soon. The other day I was at Blommers’ studio; the exhibition of wood engravings did not come off after all, but I gained this much by it that I at last found time to sort and arrange them. But it is impossible for me to give enough time to it or to take the trouble to find new wood engravings, as day by day I become more absorbed in drawing.

Today I made another nude study of a woman’s figure, kneeling, and yesterday one of a girl knitting, but also nude, which I told you before I wanted to do.

Now, sleep well, it is late at night; once more thanks for what you sent, and believe me with a handshake,

Yours sincerely, Vincent

I hope to make you a pendant for “Sorrow.”