

Dear parents,

I received your letter, many thanks.

The death of cousin A. touched me too. How suddenly things can happen.

I often thought she was not very happy, or rather, for my part, I do not doubt it for a single moment. I think one can hardly be happy as the wife of a banker, least of all nowadays. You will say, That's not true – but my thoughts are pretty much fixed about those things.

There is a certain sphere which one had better avoid, in my opinion.

To change the subject, the people of the Heike were always cheating each other, and I cannot say for sure that it never happens here. But I think that generally the people of the Heike proved to be very united basically, though they cheated each other under certain circumstances and though this was considered quite natural. I always found the Heike a remarkable example of energy, those little huts, each with a patch of ground, that poor little group of people struggling together against the barrenness of the heath – I do not deny their faults, but those are not the things which strike me first. So here I had not yet thought about whether people cheated each other. Now that I think of it, I suppose they do – probably it happens now and then – but in general what strikes me is the same thing I saw on a small scale in the Heike. Here things are generally on a larger scale and more interesting, and they have more character. It is something just as beautiful and well ordered as an ant's nest or a beehive. That's how things are, generally speaking – for me they are admirable as they are – but now what might they be basically? They might be better, I don't deny it – but I repeat, I see so much positive good here that I abstain from finding fault, especially as I am not at all able to distinguish coincidences from faults of character as yet. I must see more of it before I can decide that.

Now, when I compare the population of a city with the people here, I do not for a moment hesitate to say that the population of the heath, the peat workers here, seem to me to be better. Yes, then the differences seem enormous, though they may cheat each other here, no less than at the Heike, but I do not say they do, I do not know it yet.

Recently I had a conversation on the same subject with the man whom I board with, who is a farmer himself. It was by chance, because he asked me how things were in London, he had heard so much about it. I told him that in my opinion a simple farmer who works, and works intelligently, is the civilized man, that it has always been so and always will be, that in the country one finds an example of it here and there, and in the city one finds a few men who are almost as noble, though in quite a different way, among the very, very rare excellent people. But that in my opinion it goes no further, and that in general there is more chance of finding a reasonable human being in the country than in the city. And that in my opinion the nearer one gets to the large cities, the further one gets into the darkness of degeneration and stupidity and wickedness. He said, in fact, that he was of the same opinion.

There is a difference, and in the country it is more quiet, more peaceful, a little better, too – though they may cheat each other, it is not so bad as in the city. Here beautiful, clear autumn days alternate with stormy ones. I really like the latter best, though it is difficult to walk out-of-doors then, and sometimes even quite impossible. But going out anyway and taking a study one has made on a fine day, and correcting it according to what one sees out-of-doors in the rain, is possible, after all, and satisfying to me.

Don't worry about my health, I take care of myself, and I am feeling even better here these first days than during those last months in The Hague, when I suffered much from my nerves. And that is quite calmed down now. I think there is no better place for meditation than by a rustic hearth and an old cradle with a baby in it, with the window overlooking a delicate green cornfield and the waving of the alder bushes.

At present I am studying the ploughers all the time, so I must be off again. Goodbye, dear parents; my overcoat is all right, the woolen undervest is very comfortable, believe me,

Your loving Vincent