

[First letter after the sudden death of their Father.]

Dear Theo,

I felt the same as you did when you wrote that you could not work as usual the first days; it was the same with me.

Indeed, those were days we shall not easily forget. And yet the total impression was not terrible, only solemn. Life is not long for anybody, and the problem is only to make something of it.

Today I painted better again; the first two heads turned out badly, today's is a young girl's, almost a child's head. As to colour, it is a contrast of bright red with pale green against the flesh colour of the little face, there is already a head like it among those you took with you [F 160, JH 722].

I should like to hear whether those rolled-up things arrived safely. If I thought that C. M. was in earnest when he asked for children's heads, I might send him the one I did today, but...I can't say I feel much inclination to enter into correspondence with him unless he asks for something more definitely. But the fact he was in the studio can do no harm.

I should not mind beginning another still life of those honesties and dry leaves against blue, because he also said something about that.

Of course I intend to go on working hard, but it is absolutely necessary for me to settle my colour bill as soon as possible. Every year about this time I have been able to pay off the bill and buy some new painting materials. And this year I have painted so much during the last months that I really need them more than ever.

I did not want to talk much about it or contradict you much when you were here, but when you said that I should change someday and that I should not always stay here, any more than Mauve had always stayed in Bloemendaal, it may be true, but I personally see no good in moving, because I have a good studio here and the scenery is very beautiful.

Don't forget I am positively convinced that a painter of rural life can do no better than take Barbizon as an example.

To dwell and to live in the very midst of what one paints, for in the country nature has a new and different aspect every day.

In short, the two reasons for living in the country are: that one can work more there and that one has less expenses.

There are, let's say, some three months between now and the time you come again this summer.

If I work hard every day, by that time I can have another twenty studies for you, besides twenty more to take with you to Antwerp one day if you like.

But it is absolutely necessary that I pay my colour bill as soon as possible. You know that I didn't say a single word to you about it either in February or in March. But they have not been easy months for me, I can tell you.

The weather has gotten colder here again. As soon as we have a few fine days, I shall try to make a sketch of the churchyard. The head I painted today is, I think, as good as the one with the big white cap you have; it is somewhat like this sketch, and might serve as a pendant to it.

If you mounted these two on gilt Bristol, they would perhaps look well in gold, better than without it.

Goodbye, with a handshake, and still thinking often of your visit,

Ever yours, Vincent