

Letter 409
Nuenen, c. 15 May 1885

Dear Theo,

I just received *Germinal*, and started to read it at once. I have read about fifty pages, and think it splendid; I once travelled through these same parts on foot.

Enclosed is a sketch of a head, which I just brought home [F 141, JH 783].

There was the same one among the last studies I sent you, namely the largest of all. But painted smoothly.

Now I have not smoothed down the brush stroke and in fact the colour is quite different too.

I haven't yet made a head so much "peint avec de la terre," and more will follow now.

If all goes well – if I earn a little more – so that I can travel more – then I hope to go and paint the miner's heads someday.

But I shall work on till I am absolute master of my hand, so that I can work even more quickly than now, and, for instance, bring home about thirty studies within a month. I do not know if we shall earn money, but if it is only enough to let me work terribly hard, I shall be satisfied; the main thing is to do what one wants to do.

Yes, we must do the miners someday.

What did Portier say about the potato eaters? I know quite well it has its faults, but just because I see that the heads I am doing now are becoming more vigorous, I dare maintain that the potato eaters will keep its value in relation to future pictures, too.

Last year I often got desperate about the colour, but now I work with more confidence. You must tell me what you think best, to keep my latest work for Antwerp or to send it as soon as possible to you and Portier. It's all the same to me, I have now finished seven heads and one watercolour, so I could send a small batch again. Goodbye, once more thanks for *Germinal*, I am still reading it as I write this. It is splendid.

Ever yours, Vincent