

Dear Theo,

I will tell you what Doctor Van der Loo said about Mother in a few words.

He says:

1. that there is nothing the matter with her;
2. that she may live another ten years or so; ¹
3. that she would have to contract some disease or other to die earlier.

And finally he seems to think it quite natural that at times she should be a little bit dazed, but he did not attach much importance to it.

So she can do whatever she likes, and does not need to be very careful in the matter of making trips or moving. So much the better in any case. At any rate it is reassuring. For, speaking for myself, I believe what he says, and taking into consideration the excellent care Wil takes of Mother, there is not much chance of her contracting a disease.

I wanted to inform you of this promptly. It sets my mind at rest too.

I must say I am longing for Antwerp now. Probably the first thing I shall do there will be to go and see the pictures by Leys in his dining hall, if it is open to the public. You know that "Walk on the Ramparts," and those which Bracquemond etched, "The Table" and "The Servant Maid."

I imagine it will be beautiful there this winter, especially the docks with snow.

Of course I shall take a few pictures with me, and they will be those that I would otherwise have sent to you one of these days.

A big mill on the heath in the evening, and a view of the village behind a row of poplars with yellow leaves, a still life, and a number of drawings of figures.

At present I am rather in a fix with my work here. It is freezing hard, so working out-of-doors is impossible. It is better to take no models at all as long as I live in this house, at least until I come back. Then I save my colours and canvas so as to have ammunition there. So the sooner I can go, the better.

The other day I had a letter from Leurs about my pictures. He wrote that Tersteeg and Wisselingh had seen them, but did not care for them.

All the same I maintain that I shall bring people to have other ideas, although Tersteeg and Wisselingh may be indifferent. I have just read a few books in the style of the Souvenirs of Gigoux, which my friend in Eindhoven had ordered, and in which I found very interesting things about the men of that period, beginning with Paul Huet. And which encourage me to think that I have not attacked nature in the wrong way, nor the technique of painting, though I readily admit that I shall and must change a lot more. As to the heads which I sent you, there must be some good ones among them. I am almost sure of it. So let's go on quietly.

I don't think this winter will be tedious. Of course it will be especially a question of hard work. But there is something curious in the very feeling that one has to enter the fight. I am taking a good supply with me of the colours that I can get brayed here myself, but it will certainly be a good thing if I can get some colours of a better quality there.

I am also taking along at least forty small stretchers, of the size of those study heads which you have. And drawing material and paper, so that whatever happens, I shall always have something to do.

As I have been working absolutely alone for years, I imagine that, though I want to and can learn from others, and even adopt some technical things, I shall always see with my own eyes, and render things originally.

However, it is quite certain that I shall try to learn some more. And, if possible, especially the nude. But I am afraid I shall not succeed in getting good models, as many as I like and good ones, but shall have to find the money for it by making other things, either landscapes or city views or portraits, as I said, or even signboards and decorations. Or, what I did not mention in my previous letter among the "jobs on the side" that would be possible, by giving painting lessons, letting them begin by painting still life, which I think is a different method from that of the drawing masters. I have tried it on those acquaintances of mine in Eindhoven, and I should dare to repeat it.

I shall certainly leave immediately, as soon as I get the monthly allowance from you. And if you should by chance be able to send it a week earlier, I would also start a week earlier. But of course I do not count on this. I am glad I have now been to see the Amsterdam museum, for since then I have noticed that what I saw there has been useful in my work.

Write soon if you have time. As I am busy packing my things, my thoughts are of course more there than here. I painted continuously here to learn painting, to get firm notions about colour, etc., without having much room in my head for other things.

But when I got off to Amsterdam for a few days, I enjoyed seeing pictures again immensely.

For sometimes it is damned hard to stand completely outside the world of painters and pictures, and to have no contact with others. Since then I have felt the longing to go back to them, at least for a time. Having been

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entirely out of it for a few years and having wrestled with nature sometimes helps, and one may get a new store of courage and also of health by it, of which one can never have too much, for a painter's life is often hard enough.

As to my work, I shall have to act according to circumstances. I mean, if I can get in touch with an art dealer, I must try and get him to show some things of mine. But all is not lost that is delayed, and especially if I may succeed in making new studies of heads or figures, I will soon show you some of them.

The one landscape I am taking with me, and if possible both, but the one with the yellow leaves, I believe you would like too. I am enclosing a hasty scratch of it.

The horizon is a dark streak against a light streak of sky in white and blue. In that dark streak, little patches of red, bluish and green, or brown, forming the silhouette of the roofs and orchards, the field greenish. The sky higher up, gray, with the black saplings and yellow leaves against it. The foreground all covered with yellow leaves, in which are two little black figures and a blue one. To the right, a birch trunk, white and black, and a green trunk with red-brown leaves. [F 045, JH 959]

Good-by. With a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent

1. She died in 1907, some twenty-two years later. She lived to see her “wayward” son’s name grow in all the civilized countries of the world.



[Sketch “Lane with Poplars” JH 960 enclosed with letter]