

My dear comrade Bernard,

Perhaps you will be inclined to forgive me for not replying to your letter immediately, when you see that I am sending you a little batch of sketches along with this letter.

In the sketch "The Garden" maybe there is something like

"Des tapis velus
De fleurs et de verdurees tissus"

[Shaggy carpets woven
Of flowers and greenery]

by Crivelli or Virelli, it doesn't matter much which.

Well, anyway, I wanted to answer your quotations with the pen, but not by writing down words. Today too I am hardly in a mood for discussions; I am up to my ears in work.

I have done some large pen-and-ink drawings. Two: an immense stretch of flat country, a bird's-eye view of it seen from the top of a hill – vineyards and fields of newly reaped wheat. All this multiplied in endless repetitions, stretching away toward the horizon like the surface of a sea, bordered by the little hills of the Crau. It does not have a Japanese look, and yet it is really the most Japanese thing I have done; a microscopic figure of a ploughman, a little train running across the wheat field – this is all the animation there is in it.

Listen, one of the first days after I came to this spot I talked to a painter friend of mine, who said, "How boring it would be to do this." I didn't say anything, but I thought it so astounding that I didn't even have the strength to give that idiot a piece of my mind. And I am still going there, over and over again. All right! I have done two drawings of it – of that flat landscape, where there was nothing but ... infinity – eternity.

All right! While I was drawing, there came along a fellow who is not a painter but a soldier. I said to him "Does it amaze you that I think this as beautiful as the sea?"

Now this fellow knew the sea. "No, it doesn't amaze me," he said, "that you think this as beautiful as the sea, but I myself think it even more beautiful than the ocean; because it is inhabited"

Which of the two spectators was more of an artist, the first or the second, the painter or the soldier? Personally I prefer the soldier's eye – am I right or not?

Now it is my turn to say to you, Answer me quickly – this time by return mail – to let me know whether you will consent to make some sketches after your Breton studies for me. I have a package ready to be forwarded, but before it goes off I want to do at least half a dozen new subjects for you, pen-and-ink sketches.

Having little doubt of what you will do for your friends, I myself shall start working all the same, even if I don't know whether or not you want to do it. You see, I am going to send these sketches to my brother to persuade him to take some of them for our collection. As a matter of fact I have already written to him on the subject; but we have started on an enterprise which leaves us absolutely without a penny. The fact is that Gauguin, who has been very ill, is probably going to spend next winter with me here, in the South. And it is the cost of his journey which causes us a lot of worry. Once he is here – my goodness, when you are two you spend less than when you are alone. All the more reason why I want to have some of your things here. Once Gauguin is here, the two of us will try to do something in Marseilles, and will probably have an exhibition there. Now I should like to have some things of yours too – without spoiling your chances of making a sale in Paris, however. At any rate I don't think you will lose by it, if I can persuade you to make a mutual exchange of sketches after painted studies. And we shall strike another bargain as soon as I can, but I am rather hard up at the moment.

I am sure of one thing – namely, if sooner or later Gauguin and I have an exhibition in Marseilles, Gauguin as well as I myself will invite you to participate in it. At last Thomas has bought Anquetin's study, "The Peasant."

A cordial handshake; more before long,

Sincerely yours, Vincent