

Letter T 3
Paris, 27 October 1888

My dear Vincent,

I was overjoyed to find your telegram and your letter in reply to my first one when I got back from Brussels. I am sending you a post office money order; for, although it is possible that Gauguin received the letter I addressed to him at Pont-Aven, thinking he was still there, there is also the possibility that you have not received it, and as you are two now it will be harder to have enough to live on than when you were alone. Why don't you try to get credit with some purveyor of food in case I am not there, as happened a short while ago, or if it is impossible for me to send the money at once? I am very happy that Gauguin is with you, for I was afraid that he had encountered some obstacle which prevented him from coming. Now I see from your letter that you are unwell, and that you are worrying a good deal. I want to tell you something once and for all. I look upon it all as though the question of money and the sale of pictures and the whole financial side did not exist, or rather existed as a disease.

As it is certain that money question will not disappear before a formidable revolution or probably a series of revolutions has come about, it is necessary to treat it like smallpox if one has caught it. That is to say, take the required precautions against accidents which may result, but don't bother your head about it. You have been thinking about it far too much lately, and although there may be no symptoms of an accident, you are suffering under it. By accidents I mean misery, and in order to avoid arriving at this pass, it is necessary to take things easy, and not to commit excesses, and to try to escape the other diseases as much as possible. You speak of money which you owe me, and which you want to give back to me. I won't hear of it. The condition I want you to arrive at is that you should never have any worries. I must work for the money. Seeing that we two together haven't got very much, we must see to it that we don't take too much on our shoulders, but apart from this consideration we shall be able to go on for some time to come, even without selling anything. If you very much feel the need of working for yourself, go ahead, say the word, and I think that notwithstanding this we shall be able to stick it out, but I don't understand the calculations of so many pictures at 100 francs apiece.¹ If one wants them to be worth 100 francs, they are worth nothing at all, for the ignoble society we are living in is only on the side of those who do not stand in need of it. But knowing this, let's do as society does, and let's say, We don't stand in need of it; isn't it true that a warned man counts as two? You may do something for me if you like – that is, go on as in the past, and create an entourage of artists and friends for us, something which I am absolutely incapable of doing by my own self, and which you have been able to do, more or less, since you came to France. Isn't it true that, if the artists show the way, the others will follow suit, if the moment should come when we stand in need of it because of being unable to continue working as we are now? Personally I am firmly convinced of it. You don't know how much pain you give me when you say that you have worked so hard that you feel as though you had not lived.

In the first place I don't believe this is true, for in point of fact you are living and living like the great ones of the earth and the aristocrats. But I beseech you, warn me in time, in order that you may not feel that you have been living in misery, and that you have fallen ill because you lacked a piece of bread to keep alive. I hope Gauguin's company will be pleasant for you, and that you will recover within a very short time.

I have not received the canvases yet. Did he send them off, or shall I get them through the agency of somebody else?

At Brussels I made the acquaintance of De Groux's son, who is also an artist. Unfortunately it was on the last night of my stay there, so that I could not take a look at what he does. The movement in art we are having here seems to be zealously discussed but also approved of over there, and it would be a good thing to organize a permanent exhibition at Brussels, too. De Haan is coming tomorrow to stay with me, which I am very glad of; I am very curious to know what he is going to do, for he is anxious to start working at once. Enclosed you will find a letter from our mother, which she requested me to forward to you. Tasset will send you the paints and the canvas shortly. I hope to see you soon, and a cordial handshake to Gauguin.

Theo

1. See Vincent's letter 557.