

Letter T17
Paris, 18 September 1889

My dear Vincent,

I have put off replying to your last letter, as I had hoped to meet Father Pissarro. He has gone back home now, but intends to return to Paris shortly. When Father Tanguy and I had a talk, we already touched upon the question of whether there might be a means of bringing about the arrangement you speak of, but then there came the death of his mother, so that it was not the right moment. Last year De Haan wanted to go and stay with him, but then he said that he didn't have enough room, and he went to look for accommodation at the houses of his neighbours, but in vain. I spoke about it with Jouve, who promised me to be on the lookout for an arrangement, for staying with him is impossible through lack of room. But he has got his studio. He gives the impression of being better off now that he has found work as a decorator. He is a man with a lot of common sense. But as regards what is essential – to know whether your health is going to improve, whether you are going to live with one or the other of these people, that is the great question. When you speak of conquering your disease by work, my dear old fellow, you never did anything else, and for this reason you need not change your way of life. On the contrary, I think that the only thing which can cure you is for you to try to fortify your body, and those dark thoughts will vanish as soon as you have some more blood in your body. I am always afraid when you are working that way, in a frenzy – for you necessarily exhaust yourself by it. I understand that idleness is a weight on your mind, especially if you have no company to your liking; but when you come here, there is the danger of finding company that will enervate you. I should say go into the country somewhere where there is some forgotten artist, but you know how much you suffer from cold, as long as you are not absolutely well, you ought not to be alone. According to Rivet, and also according to what I conclude from Mr. Peyron's letters, there is a possibility, which you would rather not believe, but it is absolutely necessary that you do nothing imprudent, and that you stay under the supervision of a doctor. Do you want to go to a sanatorium here until the winter is over, and then go into the country to paint? Please give a categorical answer to this. Why do you stay locked up, and why don't you go out into the fresh air? This can only do you good, whereas a sedentary life won't do at all for you.

It is also necessary for you to eat meat.

You will probably have received the paints from Tasset's; as for the second consignment of white, it will reach you within a very short time, for he didn't have any of it in stock. There are three pictures by Meunier at the exhibition which you would have seen with pleasure. One of them is a study of red roofs above which rise the chimney stacks of factories, all of which have heavy streaks of smoke standing out against a milky morning sky. Number 2 is a group of workmen on their way to the factory, marching two abreast through heaps of slag and coal, wooden props, black chunks threatening the sky. Number 3, "La Hercheuse." She stands talking to a young boy before going down into the mine. They are dressed in the same way, but she is all woman; above their heads a big beam cuts off part of the sky against which they are delineated. And this too, though, it may be neither impressionistic nor modern painting, is very good for all that; all three pictures are hoisted high up in the room.

There is also a life-size puddler in bronze, which looks like some figure by Millet, also very good.

Jo is quite well; she is now somewhere in the middle of her pregnancy. So far all goes well; she is big, which hinders her a little, but apart from a fit of nausea now and then, there is nothing the matter with her. She is no longer uneasy now, and has no fears. I hope you are getting better, and that you are not feeling too unhappy. We often speak and think of you.

Kindest regards from Jo and a cordial handshake.

Yours, Theo