

My dear Theo,

Thanks for your letter and the 150 francs, which I handed over to M. Peyron, asking him once more to tell you each month if there had been any expenses or not – so that it does not accumulate – I also have to thank you for a package of paints, and finally, last night the canvas arrived and the Millet reproductions, of which I am very glad. M. Peyron said to me again that there is a considerable improvement and that he has good hopes for me – and that he has no objection to my going to Arles just now.

And yet very often terrible fits of depression come over me, and besides the more my health comes back to normal, the more my brain can reason coldly, the more foolish it seems to me, and a thing against all reason, to be doing this painting which costs us so much and brings in nothing, not even the outlay. Then I feel very unhappy, and the trouble is that at my age it is damnably difficult to begin anything else.

In some Dutch newspaper which you put in with the Millets – I notice some Paris letters that I attribute to Isaäcson.

They are very subtle and one guesses the author to be a sorrowful creature, restless, with a rare tenderness – a tenderness which makes me instinctively think of H. Heine's Reisebilder.

No need to tell you that I think what he says of me in a note extremely exaggerated, and that's another reason why I should prefer him to say nothing about me. And in all these articles I find, side by side with very fine things, something, I don't quite know what, that seems to me unhealthy.

He has stayed in Paris a long time – I suppose he is wiser than I, and has not been drinking, etc., but all the same I find in him again, as it were, my own mental weariness of Paris. And I think that soon his spirit will become dimmed with sadness, wearied out with the fixed idea of seeking after what is good, if he stays there much longer. You feel so much in what he says that he's a grievously suffering human being, and is very kind, happy when he can admire.

I began the "Diggers" this morning on a size 30 canvas [F 648, JH 1833].

You know, it might be interesting to try to do Millet's drawings in painting, that would be quite a special collection of copies, something like the works of Prévot, who copied the less known Goyas and Velásquezes for M. Doria. Perhaps I should be more useful doing that than doing my own painting. Mother has also written me news of Cor.

I have worked on a study of the fever ward at the Arles Hospital [F 646, JH 1686], and then having had no more canvas these last days, I have taken long walks in all directions across the country. I am beginning to feel more the total effect of the scenery in which I am living. In the future I shall perhaps come back again and again to the same subjects of Provence.

What you say of Guillaumin is very true, he has found one true thing and contents himself with what he has found, without going off at random after divergent things, and in that way he will keep straight and become even stronger on these same very simple subjects. My word, he isn't far wrong, and I like that serenity of his tremendously. I hasten to finish this letter. I have already started writing you four times without being able to finish the letter.

Ah, now certainly you are yourself deep in nature, since you say that Jo already feels her child move – it is much more interesting even than landscapes, and I am very glad that things should have changed so for you.

How beautiful that Millet is, "A Child's First Steps"!

A handshake for you and Isaäcson, kindest regards, especially to Jo. I am going to work again at the "Diggers," the days are very short. Goodbye for now.

Ever yours, Vincent