

My dear brother,

Many thanks for your letter of December 22, containing a 50-fr. note. First of all I wish you and Jo a Happy New Year and regret that I have perhaps, though quite unwillingly, caused you worry, because M. Peyron must have informed you that my mind has once more been deranged.

At the moment of writing, I have not yet seen M. Peyron, so I do not know if he has written anything about my pictures. While I was ill, he came to tell me that he had heard from you and to ask whether or not I wanted to exhibit my pictures. I told him that I would rather not exhibit them. There was no justification for that and so I hope they were sent off anyway. But anyway I am sorry not to have been able to see M. Peyron today, to ask him what he has written you. Anyway, it doesn't seem very important on the whole, since you say that it starts as late as January 3, so this will still reach you in time.

What a misfortune for Gauguin, that child falling out of the window and his not being able to be there. I often think of him, what misfortunes that man has in spite of his energy and so many unusual qualities. I think it is splendid that our sister is coming to help you when Jo has her confinement.

May that go well – I think about you two a great deal, I assure you.

Now what you say about my work certainly pleases me, but I keep thinking about this accursed trade in which one is caught as in a net, and in which one becomes less useful than other people. But there, it's no use, alas! fretting about that – and we must do what we can.

Odd that I had been working perfectly calmly on some canvases that you will soon see, and that suddenly, without any reason, the aberration seized me again.

I do not know what M. Peyron is going to advise, but while taking what he tells me into account, I think that he will dare less than ever to commit himself as to the possibility of my living as I used to. It is to be feared that the attacks will return. But that is no reason at all for not trying to distract oneself a little.

For cooping up all these lunatics in this old cloister becomes, I think, a dangerous thing, in which you risk losing the little good sense that you may still have kept. Not that I am set on this or that by preference. I am used to the life here, but one must not forget to make a little trial of the opposite.

However that may be, you see that I write comparatively calmly.

What you write about M. Lauzet's visit is very interesting, I think that when I send the canvases which are still here, he will certainly come back once more, and if I were there, I think I also should start lithographing.

Perhaps these canvases in question will be the very thing for Reid.

Above all, I must not waste my time, I am going to set to work again as soon as M. Peyron permits it; if he does not permit it, then I shall be through with this place. It is that which keeps me comparatively well balanced, and I have a lot of new ideas for new pictures.

Oh, while I was ill there was a fall of damp and melting snow. I got up in the night to look at the country. Never, never had nature seemed to me so touching and so full of feeling.

The rather superstitious ideas they have here about painting sometimes depress me more than I can tell you, because basically it is really fairly true that a painter as a man is too absorbed in what his eyes see, and is not sufficiently master of the rest of his life.

If you saw the last letter Gauguin wrote me, you would be touched to see how straight he thinks, and for so powerful a man to be almost helpless is unfortunate. And Pissarro too, and Guillaumin the same. What a business, what a business.

I have just received a letter from Mother and from Wil too.

Just now you and Jo will have many anxieties at times, and a bad time to get through, but these are the things without which life would not be life, and it makes one serious. It is a good idea to have Wil there.

As for me, don't worry too much. I fight calmly against my disease, and I think that I shall soon be able to take up my work again.

And this will be another lesson to me to work straightforwardly and without too many hidden meanings, which disturb one's consciousness. A picture, a book, must not be despised, and if it is my duty to do this, I must not hanker after something different.

It is time for this letter to go. Once more thanks for yours and a good handshake for you and Jo, believe me,  
Ever yours, Vincent.