

Letter T 1a¹
Paris, 10 July 1887

My dearest Caro:

For a long time now I have been carrying about a heavy burden, which I want to throw down at last. If you were not who you are, you would have accused me of a lack of cordiality long ago, as I left your letters unanswered for such a long time. It is a great fault of mine that I am such a lazy letter writer, and I very often have to listen to reproving remarks from home on my sluggishness in writing.

But oh, such a long time ago I made up my mind to thank you most cordially for the proofs of unalterable friendship which it was a great delight to me to receive from you. It really did me good to imagine for a moment that the happy days which went by such a long time ago still belong to the present. Not that I need to be reminded of that time; the place you occupy in my memory, when I think of the little circle of friends of the past, is never to be obliterated, and it is not often one finds a friend such as you were.

When I received your last letter on my birthday, it seemed to be as though I saw everything before my eyes again, and my mind couldn't help joining yours in your thoughts about your home and family. The portrait of your youngest darling occupies a place of honour on my mantelpiece, and it is a pleasure for me to look at it.

I can well imagine that she is a treasure, and that you are treasuring up the experience of seeing those young little souls grow up, and of leading them, and not for a single moment do I doubt that you are an excellent treasurer. It was bitterly painful for me to learn that your own health leaves much to be desired, and that there is rather often something wrong with it. I hope from the bottom of my heart that summer air and summer sunshine, which there is no lack of now, will have brought about your complete recovery. As for me, I was rather poorly for a short time last winter, but I was entirely restored to health after a while. In point of fact, it is decidedly improper to be sick or poorly, even if one has a lot of work to do in one's business.

As you may know I am now living with my brother Vincent, who is studying the art of painting with indefatigable zeal. As he requires rather a lot of space for his work, we are living in a rather big apartment in Montmartre (54 Rue Lepic) which is, as you know, a suburb of Paris, built on the slope of a hill. The remarkable thing about our dwelling is that one has a magnificent view of the whole town from its windows, with the hills of Meudon, St. Cloud and so on on the horizon, and over it an expanse of sky nearly as large as when one is standing on the top of a dune.

With the different effects produced by the various changes in the sky it is a subject for a I don't know how many pictures, and if you saw it you would probably add that it might furnish a subject for poetry too.

A description of a view of this character, though taken from another spot, is to be found in Zola's *Une Page d'amour*, which you may have read. I take it you can imagine that for me, in the same way as in the past, pictures belong always to the great attractions of life, and my regular intercourse with painters has not caused my predilection to decline. Only at times I have my doubts about which I like most, the painter himself or his work, I consider it a great pity that this branch of the arts is so unpopular, for only a few persons know what a rich source of poetry may be found in it. In this respect for novelists and the musicians are the *enfants gâtés*, the spoiled children. And yet it is possible to appreciate the one just as well as the other.

If I can find time for it, reading at least always remains a great delight to me. Don't you think that many beautiful things have been produced lately? What I deplore is that so many fine things are written which one can hardly discuss, at least with ladies. Zola, Guy de Maupassant and others will go on belonging to the forbidden fruits for a long time to come. Not so long ago I greatly enjoyed Loti's books (which all persons may read); how masterly those descriptions of nature, and what a delicacy of feeling there is in them. In Holland people keep themselves so well posted on everything that is published that it may be old to you already, but I venture to send you a copy of *Pêcheur d'Islande*.

This summer, maybe very soon, I am going to take a trip to Holland, and I rejoice at the thought of visiting all my old friends. As soon as I am in The Hague, it will be a festive occasion for me to drop in on you, and to have any old-fashioned chat again, and hear the news about you all, how things are going with Willem, with the girls, etc., etc. How sad the news was that Mr. V.S. lost his wife so suddenly. What a contrast to his otherwise so prosperous career. Has he kept his son? I hope so for him from the bottom of my heart.

I feel sure you will be kind enough to say a thousand amiable things ("mille choses amiables") to your father, mother, etc., in my name, and special regards to Willem, and a kiss for the girls. As for you, I thank you again most kindly for your letter, and I hope you will forgive my not writing one sooner. I wish you all the best.

Affectionately yours, Theo van Gogh

1. Letter to Mrs. Van Stockum-Haanebeek (See Vincent's Letter 9a etc.).

