

Dear Theo,

Look here, this will not do. In your letter you speak about an “amour traînant” [flagging love] and that when you had to face that question, you finally broke it off. Well, this as at least a manly action.

I am involved – not exactly with an “amour traînant” – but with an “amitié traînant.”

Don't you think we might apply the same system to it?

One of the things of which I say “this will not do” is that you send me a third of the money, and write, “I could send you the rest, but it suits me better to do so toward the end of the month, if it doesn't inconvenience you.” Now must you ask me if it suits me or not? You know yourself how last month I used three-quarters of the money to pay things off. But I did not complain, not even when the money arrived as late as March 10.

But now, when I promised to pay various other things in March which I owed when I came here, to have to wait now till the end of the month again, whether that is exactly a piece of good fortune for me, I leave you to decide.

Allons, Brother – I suppose you will not think it “brotherly” of me if I class our friendship, such as it is at present, very decidedly among the things without pith and marrow – but in the past I should have been greatly worried by that question of being brotherly or not brotherly. And now – I shall not be worried by it. And I shall feel pretty indifferent to what you think of my doings. I know that for myself, just because we began as friends and with a feeling of mutual respect – I know that for myself I will not suffer its degenerating into protection – I decline to be your protégé, Theo. Why? Because! And more and more it threatens to degenerate into this.

What you say about my work is silly – I call it silly when you tell me how the Salon's jury would judge my work when I never said a syllable about sending it to the Salon – I think it silly and insipid...oh, there are more things I think silly and insipid, and then the other part is the concluding nice little compliment of this type – if I did this or that, I should be the person to make you feel more at peace with this, that and the other thing.

If you do not care so much for Lhermitte any more, I tell you that the fault lies with you. I agree with you that I rate Millet perhaps even higher, but damn! To see so many things of Lhermitte's as you do, and not to be sufficiently impressed, to forget all comparisons – I call that narrow-minded. Something which, for that matter, you are going to be subject to more and more, I fear.

I never mentioned sending my work to the Salon, did I? But I did speak to you at the time about the people at the illustrated papers, especially about Buhot. And I don't take it back that I urged you to do so.

If you meant it seriously that, after another period of hard work on my part, you would try to show my drawings, I should be perfectly willing not to bring them before the public before we had some thoroughly good drawings.

On one condition, however – that in the meantime my life would not be too lonesome and miserable, my position not too false, but that I could accept the present with a sense of freedom. But how is it at present? You do absolutely nothing to procure me some distraction, which I sometimes need so badly, by meeting people, or seeing things.

In short, I feel that nothing would please you more than my not bringing myself to your personal notice. It has already been this way for more than a year, and now the reaction is that I say, None of it's of any use this way – neither for you nor for me, and it would be stupid to go on in this way, stupid!

When I read over the letters you've sent me recently, I see in them that you exert yourself to make it look as though I am the one to blame if we part company.

This is such a dear little Van Goghish trick, such a nice bit of self-righteousness; for my part I shall not grudge you it if it means something to you. Father would do the same. I know for myself what I have felt during the past year, and what my thoughts are about our friendship – as it is now – unbearable.

Whatever may be thought about whether I do right or wrong in speaking as I do, at any rate I'm the one who's taking a chance. Theo, it is more convenient for you to be completely rid of me – personally, if I break with you, especially in financial matters, I have absolutely nothing else, and such a way of doing things is the opposite of the usual tactics of Messrs. Van Gogh & Co.

Take this in whatever way you like ———

Conclusion: You indicate that if my drawings were so beautiful that you could put them next to Millet's and Daumier's, you would occupy yourself with them.

Of course I on my part am willing to believe this, but at the same time I know something else – that in that case there are other fellows whom I could apply to. And if you try to make it appear that the house of Goupil & Co. deals principally in the Millet and Daumier type of art, I tell you that Messrs. G. & Co. most certainly did not occupy themselves with Millet at the time, before the big Millet sales – and they did about as little for Daumier. Then, in Daumier's and Millet's younger days, Messrs. G. & Co. were busily occupied with Julien Brocard and Monsieur Paul Delaroche – in my eyes not such a very fine Monsieur Delaroche, you know. So much for the house of G. & Co.

Goodbye,

Yours sincerely, Vincent

I know beforehand that I shall be sorry, and at times even very sorry if we part.

And perhaps – although in your case no inconvenience and cares are involved – you on your part might think it more or less unpleasant.

But having called the thing by its true name, amitié traînante, half-hearted friendship, what is left except separation? And to tell you the truth, I have repeatedly thought that things would become impossible between you and me unless I could renew some relation, however slight, with Goupil & Co. – Goupil & Co., toward whom after all I have never misbehaved myself, except that during six long years I worked for them to the best of my ability. Which was most certainly a serious misdemeanour on my part, and surely a sufficient reason for hating each other, hein? – such is commerce after all.

But you were too high and mighty to take the slightest notice not only of my work but also of what I told you about what happened to me during these last years in The Hague, which might and should have been redressed.

Speaking of “brotherly,” do such things belong among the brotherlinesses? And can I think otherwise than that it's more and more insufferable of you to write something like, Therefore have a little patience?

Look here, I need my patience for my work, my friend, and if I am a little short with you and others, the reason is that I think it mean to put a fellow off with fair words, such fair words as, Therefore have a little patience.

So now I am quarreling with you – and high time too.

In the beginning you used to show my drawings to Heyerdahl – to Buhot – why not later?

Really and truly I am furious that you have been so terribly lax since then – I am furious for this reason – it is not because of anything else – it is because of that damned way you have of saying over and over again, “Keep on working,” “have a little patience,” whereas in the meantime you do not lift a finger to see that I get satisfaction out of my work.