

Dear Mother,

When you say you are a mother nearly seventy years old, it must be true, but one would not notice it from your handwriting, for it struck me as being very firm. Also Theo and Wil wrote me that you seem to be getting young again, and I think this is very good, and is sometimes necessary in life. The news about Cor – no wonder that you are preoccupied with it, and it will be hard for both sides to have to separate. He is right though, I think, not to hesitate to accept this position, as it seems that one can get on better and be happier in the world by being at a distance from these big cities, not only Paris, but Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and so many others in Europe. There is more that is natural and good in the world than one would suppose here in our continent.

I have often heard talk, not exactly about the Transvaal, but for instance about Australia, by people who came from there and were always longing to go back. Also about Haiti, for instance, and Martinique, where Gauguin, who stayed with me in Arles, has been. And I suppose that the Transvaal will have several things in common with Australia. One has the chance to develop oneself better there and to use one's energy better than in this European circumlocution.

As far as the sorrow, dear Mother, is concerned, which we have and continue to have in separation and loss, it seems to me it is instinctive, that without that we could not resign ourselves to separations, and that probably it will help us to recognize and find each other again later. It seems impossible for things to remain in their place. And yet apples do not fall far away from the tree, nor will stinging nettles grow from their pips. Beyond that I know nothing. I have good news from Theo and Jo; yet I am not surprised that he is coughing, etc. Sometimes I have wished that they lived outside Paris, and not on a fourth or fifth floor, etc., and yet I should not want to take the responsibility of urging him to change, because Theo needs action, business and friends in Paris itself. Let his wife take care that he gets back to his old Dutch food as much as possible, for he has been deprived of this for about ten years, and has been fed with restaurant food without any family life. I have every hope that she will understand this, and perhaps has understood it already.

The main thing is perhaps this: do you remember the story in that book *De Pruuvers*<sup>1</sup>, in which there was the tale of someone who was ill, who used to look every morning at the maid who was sweeping the floor and think that she had "something reassuring" about her.

This is the main thing to which, in the most different and the most divergent cases of sickness, recovery can largely be attributed. Therefore I should, cruel as it may seem, leave the anxiety about the strength of Theo's constitution to her, and let her worry and struggle for a year before we have to be concerned about him. And it seems to me, if we do not worry about it, this is a sign of our own confidence, and of "something reassuring" in nature in general.

It seems to me that it is not much warmer here in summer than at home, as far as being oppressed by it is concerned, as the air is much clearer and purer here. Further, we very often have a strong wind, the "mistral." I have been painting in the wheat fields during the hottest part of the day, without being unduly troubled by it. But sometimes one notices that the sun is rather powerful, as the grain gets yellow very soon, but the fields with us are cultivated more intensely and more regularly than here, where in many places the rocky soil is not fit for everything. Here there are very beautiful fields with olive trees, which are silvery grey in leaf, like pollard willows.

Then I never get tired of the blue sky. One never sees buckwheat or rape here, and perhaps there is in general less variety than with us. And I should so much like to paint a buckwheat field in flower, or the rape in bloom, or flax, but maybe I will have an opportunity for this later on in Normandy or Brittany. Also, here one never sees those moss-covered roofs on the barns or cottages as at home, nor the oak coppices, nor spurry, nor beech hedges with their white tangled old stems. Nor the real heather, nor the birches which were so beautiful in Nuenen. But what is beautiful in the South are the vineyards, but they are in the flat country or on the hillsides. I have seen some, and even sent a picture of them to Theo, in which a vineyard was quite purple [F 495, JH 1626], fire-red, and yellow and green and violet, like the Virginia creeper in Holland. I like to see a vineyard as much as a wheat field. Besides, the hills full of thyme and other aromatic plants are very nice here, and because of the clearness of the air, from the heights one can see so much farther here than at home.

Now I close by saying that I believe you will be glad that your son Theo has at last got married. If I were you, I should not worry about his health, but in your place I should take care to make an arrangement with him that he and his wife come to visit you twice a year instead of once. This would be good for you and for them, especially when Cor goes away. As far as his business is concerned, it will do him no harm to get some other thoughts, and as far as his wife is concerned, you may be sure that she will not blame you if you stimulate his desire to go to Holland with her from time to time. Don't forget that we have as much reason for unthankfulness as for thankfulness toward the Paris business, and you in your quality of a mother of nearly seventy may take this into account.

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I embrace you in thought and with a handshake for Cor I wish him courage in his enterprise.  
Believe me always,  
Your loving Vincent

Dialect word meaning “tasters.”