

LETTERS OF A POST-IMPRESSIONIST by Vincent Van Gogh. PREFACE Vincent Van Gogh was born in 1853, at Groot-Zundert, a village in the province of North Brabant in Holland, and was the son of a clergyman. Like his two uncles, he was destined to be an art dealer, and from the time when he finished his education, until his twenty-third year, he worked for the firm of Goupil at The Hague, in London, and in Paris. He left Paris to return to England, where for a short time he was engaged as a schoolmaster in the country. But this did not satisfy him either; and he now wished to study theology at Amsterdam. When, however, he discovered that these studies also failed to give him precisely what he was seeking he left for Belgium, where he went among the miners as an evangelist. There among the coal-mines he began to draw. After going to Brussels he returned in 1881 to his home, where he began to pursue independent studies until he moved to The Hague, and for the first time entered into relations with other painters. In 1883 he went into the province of Drenthe, and very shortly afterwards back again to Brabant, where he worked strenuously until 1885. The things he drew and painted there, in Zundert, were almost all completed during a few months, and in the spring of 1886 he came to Antwerp, where he remained for a few months, and then he went to Paris, where he lived for some time, and where he met many of the artists who were to become his friends. It was in Paris that he became acquainted with the Impressionist school, and entered into personal relations with one or two of its exponents. Very soon after this he travelled southward, and he spent the summer of 1888 in Arles and later at St. Remy, where he lived for the last period of his life. Van Gogh made more closely to the modern French school than to the art of his native land. The remainder of his life was spent in a Hospital for Diseases of the Nerves at Auvers-sur-Oise, where he died in 1890. His art was appreciated during his life by a very few and it is but within recent years that it has found admiring who in many cases have been most ardently enthusiastic. Of the following letters, some were addressed to his brother and the remainder to his friend E. Bernard. LETTERS TO HIS BROTHER DEAR BROTHER, You must not take it amiss if I write to you again so soon. I do so only in order to tell you how extraordinarily happy painting makes me feel. Last Sunday I began something which I had had in mind for many a day: it is the view of a flat green meadow, dotted with haystacks. A cinder path running alongside of a ditch crosses it diagonally. And on the horizon, in the middle of the picture, there stands the sun. The whole thing is a blend of colour and tone—a vibration of the whole scale of colours in the air. First of all there is a mauve tinted mist through the sun peeps, half concealed by a dark violet bank of clouds with a thin brilliant red lining. The sun contains some vermilion, and above it there is a strip of yellow which shades into green and, higher up, into a bluish tint that becomes the most delicate azure. Here and there I have put in a light purple or gray cloud gilded with the sun's livery. The ground is a strong carpet-like texture of green, gray and brown, full of light and shade and full of life. The water in the ditch sparkles on the way. It is in the style of one of Emile Breton's paintings. I have also painted a large stretch of dunes. I put the colour on thick and treated it broadly. I feel quite certain that, on looking at these pictures, no one will ever believe that they are the first studies I have made. 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