

27th February 1807

To Mr G Van Crombrugghe, Brewer in Grammont, Dept of the Escaut.
Mondidier, 27th February 1807

Very dear Father and Mother,

It is quite a while since I wrote to you; my application my studies, whose progress is not yet as I would wish, is partly the reason but not all. Laziness is part of the reason also. I beg you therefore, dear Parents, to forgive me.

For some time, three times a week during the evening meal, a talk is given by senior pupil; this teaches one to speak in public, and educates children for preaching, the law or for the public declamations of the judiciary. Besides it is easy to judge how much these tests embolden one. There are other little exercises to encourage competition; in every class the children choose from among the cleverest two captains, who in their turn choose other children; and these two teams compete, in translation, in essays, etc. and strive to win the weekly composition prize cross. You can imagine the fervour that goes into these competitions, how much they stir up competition and excite the spirit. It is all done in good order; the teacher decides the victor and this is accepted without retort or grumbling.

The time approaches where my two dear sisters are going for the first time to approach the Holy Table. I am sure that they are preparing themselves for it with ardour. I will be happy to write to them before this time, and will continually pray to the Good Lord that he might condescend to give them the necessary graces to take such a big step and on which perhaps depend their salvation.

I don't doubt that you are more and more happy with François; if he doesn't make brilliant progress it is not very surprising; this child knew hardly a word of French when he came here, and you will admit, dear Parents, that principles of a language, especially the French language, are very difficult.

I am sending you my report for the last month.

Farewell, very dear Parents; I have the honour to be

Your very obedient and devoted son
C Van Crombrugghe

