

11th October 1807

To Mr G Van Crombrughe, Businessman in Grammont, Dept of Escaut.
Mondidier, 11th October 1807

Very dear Father and Mother

It is, very dear Parents, only seven days since I left you, but these seven days appear to me to have lasted so long that the sweet names of Father and Mother don't seem to exist any more except in my imagination. I will not say any more, my heart softens...

I did not arrive here until Thursday towards eleven o'clock in the morning; it was already late when I arrived in Mons last Monday. The coach to Paris had passed there between four and five in the afternoon and I had to wait until the afternoon of the following day, or to take the coach from Valenciennes on Tuesday at six o'clock in the morning. We decided to leave by this coach in the hope of finding space in Cambrai on the coach from Paris. On my arrival in Cambrai I went to the coach office where I was told that coach would arrive at two o'clock in the morning and that there was no guarantee of a place as one departure had just been cancelled. However, I made a booking, but it was useless as there was no space. I saw myself reduced to taking a stopping coach, and therefore took a "cariolle" to Roi, spent the night there and left on foot for Mondidier where our trunk arrived a little time after us. I cannot tell you, dear Parents, how tired we were; you know what it is like to travel by cart. We are already settled here. I am in the second class and François is for some weeks in the eighth: I am not very put out by this as there is a good teacher - the same one that I had in the fourth class last year. I must tell you about a new innovation which has been introduced to excite competition between classes. There will be a particular assembly of our teachers every month to decide which class has worked best, and a vote will be taken among the pupils of that class to decide who has led the others in application. The two pupils who have worked best will be given medals: one will get a medal that says "labor improbus omnia vincit" on one side, "Mondidierimense collegium excellentia signum" on the other; the other pupil will get a ribbon of honour. Besides this, a banner will distinguish the class and the class will occupy the place of honour on walks. The pupil who is decorated with the medallion has right to excuse some of his companions who would otherwise have punishments. This was instituted today and it is the fourth class of last year that has been judged to have worked best before the holidays; in reward, it is this class that has the medallion, the ribbon and the banner until Christmas. We had a big dinner and we will have one day of holiday of our choice during this month.

I would have many things to tell my dear brother and my dear sisters, but time does not allow it; once again I have failed in my duty. But please, dear Parents, be the messengers of my close feelings for them. My wish for my dear sisters is that they should be always obedient and grow in virtue as in age. Please also tell my brother Jean that I very often think about him, and François, and I embrace him most fondly.

Very dear Parents, please believe me forever

Your very devoted son

C Van Crombrughe

PS: François seems to have more application than last year and I do not doubt that he will keep the promises that he made you. Please present my respects to all the dear family, particularly to my Aunt Huleu. As for the accounts I brought back, the mistakes have been recognised, and all is arranged as you wanted it. Farewell, very dear Parents, I recommend myself to your prayers. If it would be possible to send me the remedy that Mr Delmarre used to heal my eyes I would be very pleased, because it seems that I am going to have problems with my eyes.

