

11th October 1805

Mr Van Crombrughe, Businessman in Grammont, Dpt. Escaut
Amiens 11th October 1805

Very dear Father and Mother.

I hope that my brother has arrived safely at home. This letter is to tell you that the school I am in is not as we believed; the curriculum is based mainly on the Latin language and the same plan is followed as in the Collèges. Arithmetic is only a minor subject taught twice a week, and the remainder of the time is used for Latin, History, etc.

As, dear Father, I do not have any inclination for Latin, I would like to have your decision. There is, in the city, another school run by a Clergyman where what is germane to trade is taught. Fr Sellier, one of our masters knows it well. If you want, I could present myself for admission there. I ask you to write me as soon as possible, because the academic year is already well advanced.

Please present my good wishes to all the family.

Your very obedient and respectful son

C Van Crombrughe

PS: As for the fees at the other school they are pretty much the same as here

Sir,

If I might add a word to your son's letter in order to explain the topic of his letter. He is right to tell you that Latin is the basis of the teaching given here, and in receiving him as one of our Pupils, we did not imagine that he was destined to follow another plan of study. The Prospectus you were sent letting you know the nature of our Establishment should surely have made it clear enough that our object is to give an complete education and not only what is germane to trade. Your son has made a good impression and although we have only had him a few days we find him to be of intelligence, good will and docility, so we are led to believe that he would succeed in the study of the Latin language as everything else.

There are pupils older than him who have recently begun to study the elements of this language and who have had success; we have had some of 24 or 26 years old and at that age were still in the fourth form. So if your son has the inclination no time been lost. But he has declared that Latin repels him and that he has no intention of applying himself to it. So, Sir, if you want to follow the path that he proposes to you, of going to another school in Amiens in where he will find help and the kind of studies that he wants to follow, then well and good. However, if you judge it right to make him remain with us it will be sufficient for you to let him know your will. He is disposed to do what you want and it is this submissiveness, joined to other good qualities that he has already shown us, that would make us regret it if he were to leave us. I do not need to make any claims in favour of the Latin Language; you know its usefulness in all kinds of study. I will only tell you that if your son had been with us since the beginning of his education he would know everything that he already knows in the fields of calculus, orthography and geography. Furthermore he would be in a position to appreciate "latinity" which would have given him two inestimable advantages; firstly in having a pure, epistolary style; secondly, he would be ready to learn living languages such as Spanish, Italian and English in only a few months. Without Latin these languages would take him years.

Please accept, Sir, the assurance of my esteem and that I have the honour to be,

Your very humble and very obedient servant

Sellier

