

Château Muzot-sur-Sierre, Valais
January 16, 1922

Balthus, my dear friend,

I owe you a nice long letter in response to your Christmas letter, and I owe Pierre one for his letter, too—but neither will be written today. I have written too much, my poor quill is all stubby from having made such long marches in almost all the countries of Europe and even farther; and I want it to be well rested for its “stationary” exercises, the work that must remain its favorite and regular “gymnastics.”

But I must at least thank you, my dear, and very warmly indeed, for the pages you wrote to me. I thought the little Chinese ornamentation was *very lovely*; I'm sure you will have made others since. Are they a commission?

Here everything is proceeding as usual, and the regularity is a blessing I have great need of, so that I can resume my work and my thoughts, all of bygone times to some extent, in a world that does nothing but continue to move forward.⁶ But your dear mother, she has been sick! Is she better now? She surprised me with such a sublime and touching gift—a spontaneous watercolor that she dashed off after an old photograph of my parents. It's amazing: the charm, the style, and, more than was even necessary, the truly accurate resemblance she was able to evoke in reproducing these effaced and rather evasive forms—an inspired work. Every day I admire it again and it never ceases to amaze me. Good Lord,

if the three of you could ever find yourselves back in a position to do what you're each capable of, if someone just gave you a little space and lifted all this useless depression from your shoulders . . .

Rothapfel has sent you (from Heidelberg) the originals of *Mitsou*, hasn't he? (He promised me he would.) They aren't too badly damaged, I hope? I get a letter almost every day with kind words about *Mitsou*—I'll show you the most interesting ones sometime. I sent out a lot of copies between Christmas and New Year's.

So, my dear Balthus, *bon courage!* Winter will soon be over, and bright new ideas always return with the spring, and you emerge from under the Berlin clouds.⁷ All the best to Pierre. I'm glad I chose something to his taste when I sent him the little Gide book. As ever, my dear partner in bookmaking, I remain your friend,

RENÉ