

june 18-1968

Dearest Nell,

"Of Night and Day" reached me at a moment of deep distress. Within a fortnight I lost two of my best friends. And a third, the very pivot of our World-federal action in Belgium and, at the same time, the voice of our movement abroad, Maurice R. Cosyn, is dying.

I cannot say how lonely I felt. Lonely and dejected.

Need I say that in these circumstances your fabulous book, with the kind dedication, came as a blessing and helped me to accept and thus to surmount my sorrow?

For your book is much more than a collection of splendid photographs. It is the struggle of a humble human being with the mystery of life. A good friend of mine, the late Flemish poet Richard Minne wrote the following verses (I translate them literally):

There is on earth nothing, my God,
but the spaces around us
the singing oceans
the suns and the humming
of swarms in the evening late
there is nothing but empty talk
and my longing that fights for you.

This little poem could have been written by you. It is, as you write on p.11 communication "at heart level" "communication and communion".

And what a find, the last verse on p.12:

"Each day is a lifetime... Each day is a miracle".

What a godsend and how striking the photograph to illustrate your text!

I am also in admiration for your abstract photographs. To begin with the two fishes on the cover. And especially the simplest: p.13, with the profound text of Rilke, p.62, p.81, p.94.

I am also happy to find again the Nell of the former books with photographs as those of p.10, p.35!, p.50, p.76, p.77 and p.79!

A glad surprise for me were the three arresting and heart-gripping photographs of your grandson Chris. May I live long enough to follow him a little.



The text, the essential texts, which you chose from Lao-Tze and Sappho to Carl Sandburg and Teilhard De Chardin show that you, as Henry Thoreau, wants to 'live deep' and the way in which you illustrate them "that you are able to give a true account of your excursion".

There are three congenial authors which I should like to find in your next book:

Echnaton (Hymn to the Sun), Ralph, Waldo Emerson (seven essays) and, above all, Saint Francesco (Il cantico delle Creature). The anecdote from the Recollections by Erica Anderson you quote on p. 80, reminds me of a personal experience:

Three years ago we were in Assisi, the home of Franciscus where we visited the place where Franciscus went to meditate.

A friar explained us how Franciscus built here, with his own hands, amidst the woods, a humble dwelling-place, how he lived there and how one day he was tempted by the devil.

- "But" he said "Francesco was a valiant man. He wrestled with the devil who, after a long struggle, was compelled to give it up".

"Here", said the friar "in this hole (in questo buco) the devil disappeared".

I looked at the hole and asked, not without a tinge of mockery:

-And is the devil still there?

The answer came quick as lightning:

- "No, signore, adesso ci aspetta sulla luna". (No, Sir, now he is expecting us on the moon).

I never received a better and more relevant reply.

And with this, Dearest Nell, I must close this letter. To morrow we leave our home "unter den Linden" to go on holiday for two weeks to our cherished isle "Vlieland" (do you remember: seven years ago!) where we will live at the edge of the ocean, in the bright sun with brother wind and sister moon, with the eider-ducks, the oyster-catchers, the sea-gulls, the redshanks, the grebes and - not to forget - the skylarks who are there almost as common as the sparrows here.

Be sure, I shall remember you there!

With all my love and kindest wishes from Paula
Margeret. "And don't forget me" says Patty.

Your Herman