

The Hague, 22 January 1882

Sunday evening Schenkweg 138 (near Ryn station)

Dear Theo,

It is true I wrote you only yesterday, but I thought I would write you again. For though I still have a dose of courage left, it is sometimes very hard always to show a good face to Mauve and Tersteeg and others. Yet I must, for though I do not pretend to be carefree, I need not tell them all the details and particulars. But it happens often enough that I am quite at a loss as to what to do. Now this morning I felt so miserable that I went to bed; I had a headache and was feverish from worry because I dread this week so much, and do not know how to get through it. And then I got up, but went back to bed again; now I feel a little better, but I wanted you to know that I did not exaggerate in yesterday's letter. If only I continue working hard, it will not be long before I earn something with my work; but meanwhile I am greatly harassed by scarcity of funds. Besides, I still have relatively few drawing materials, or else defective ones. For the present it is sufficient – I have my paintbox and easel and brushes; but, for instance, this week my drawing board warped like a barrel because it was too thin, and my easel also got damaged in delivery, which is bad enough.

Well, there are a lot of things which I still want to or have to improve; of course it needn't all be done at once, but daily it causes small expenses which, added together, worry me a great deal. Sometimes my clothes need repairing, and Mauve has already given me a few hints about that too, which I shall certainly carry out; but it cannot all be done at once. You know my clothes are chiefly old things of yours which have been altered for me, or a few have been bought ready-made and are of poor material. So they look shabby, and especially all my dabbling in paint makes keeping them decent even more difficult; it is the same with boots. My underwear is also beginning to fall apart. You know that I have been without means for a long time already, and then many things get dilapidated.

And sometimes one involuntarily becomes terribly depressed, if only for a moment, often just when one is feeling cheerful, as I really am even now. That's what happened this morning; these are evil hours when one feels quite helpless and faint with overexertion. I think it was really because I had arranged with Mauve about what I would do with a model out-of-doors, and then all at once I thought, Perhaps I cannot do it because in two days I shall not have a cent left, and then Mauve will think I was afraid. So I got up again to write you once more because I felt so anxious. Having to think about too many other things against my will hampers me so much in my work; even when I am in front of my model, I do not know how I shall pay him or whether I shall be able to go on the next day or not. And I must, I must be calm and quiet in order to work – it is difficult enough anyhow. And especially now I must keep up my spirits; but I felt so clearly this morning that my strength was failing me, not my ardour or my courage, and therefore I'm telling you once more.

I can quite imagine that you also have your difficulties, but I think some arrangement might be made with Tersteeg which would settle everything.

Now that I can work at Pulchri with a model two evenings a week, perhaps four days with the model would be enough if necessary; and now I have found that old woman, it needn't be so expensive as it was at first when I had a new one every day. For I have already had several models, but they are either too expensive or they think it's too far to come here, or they make objections afterward and do not come back. But I think I have hit on the right one in this old woman.

Yesterday I had a lesson from Mauve on drawing hands and faces so as to keep the colour transparent. Mauve knows things so thoroughly, and when he tells you something, he exerts himself and doesn't just say it to hear himself talk; and I exert myself to listen carefully and to put it into practice. Yesterday I told Mauve again that it was so necessary for me to earn something, but I will not ask him for money, as he gives me something that is much better than money; and besides, he has already helped me with my furniture, and that is more than enough.

Now that I have written you, I will set to work again tomorrow full of confidence. When you were in Etten last summer, you spoke about my working in watercolours. At that point I didn't even know how to start it. Now the light is beginning to dawn, and in spite of everything, the sun is rising.

Well, adieu, Theo, receive a handshake in thought and believe me,

Yours sincerely, Vincent