

Letter 310
The Hague, c. 11 August 1883

Dear Theo,

I was very glad to hear that you are on your way. Thanks for your letter and the enclosure.

I needn't tell you how I long for your coming. Recently I have been far from well – always the same thing, at times palpitations of the heart, too. I am afraid it will eventually turn out that the heart is affected. Well, I don't know much about it, but I do know that you must not mention it at home, or to anybody else, for fear of their getting wrong ideas about my circumstances.

The only thing I want is to make some good work “quand bien même,” and there is a chance of doing this if we keep our serenity, whether the future is dark or not.

If I knew what train you would be on, I should meet you at the station. And in case you came while I was out, the woman could tell you where I am, for in order not to miss you, I go no farther from home than to be the Binkhorst just across the way, to paint a few studies.

I wonder what you will say about the work, whether you will find something in it or not. Well, we shall see.

All the time I am planning a large picture of the potato diggers, though it might not be finished until next year, and only half finished this season. I think the composition might stay the way it is, and I just might get started.

I am not competent to ascertain to what extent my illness has a physical cause, or if it is only the consequence of overstrained nerves. It sometimes seems to me that I ought to have seen you between times and discussed the work, but now you have come at last, and I am quite sure that at all events our being together will calm me down.

I hope we shall take some nice long walks together, too.

Did I tell you that at Loosduinen I found thornbushes exactly like the “Buisson” by Ruysdael? I intend to make studies for the potato diggers in that neighborhood.

I hope to be all right again soon. I will try as hard as I can, for I hate being unable to go on with full vigour. When I wrote Rappard that I did not believe my only aim in life could be to preserve my health, I meant that there are circumstances when one has to choose between one's work and having nothing to eat, or between eating and dropping one's work (namely, when the work brings expenses and for the moment yields no profit).

In some cases I prefer the former, and do not think I am wrong, for our work remains, but we do not, and the main thing is to create; I would rather have a few years of that than years of brooding over it and putting it off. And I said to Rappard then that for my part I thought there was truth in the mysterious saying, “whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for the Gospel's sake shall find it.”

Adieu, boy, I hope to see you soon. With a handshake,

Yours sincerely, Vincent