

Letter 139
Brussels, January 1881

Mon très cher,

As I have not heard from you for so long – meaning, not for several months – nor even had the slightest answer to my last letter, perhaps it will not be out of place to ask you for some sign of life.

I must say it seems rather strange and rather unaccountable that you have not written me since the one letter I received on my arrival here. Not to write is good, but to write seasonably is not bad either; in some cases it is even much better.

In thinking of you, I unconsciously said to myself, Why doesn't he write? If he is afraid of compromising himself in the eyes of Messrs. Goupil & Co. by keeping in touch with me – is his position with those gentlemen so shaky and unstable that he is obliged to be so careful? Or is it that he is afraid I will ask him for money? But if this was the reason for your silence, you might at least have waited until I tried to squeeze something out of you, as the saying goes.

However, I will not prolong this letter unnecessarily by enumerating a lot of things which occasionally pass through my head when I think of the reasons you may have had for not writing.

I have been drawing all winter until now, and I have also read a great deal, for indirectly that is very necessary to me. On the whole I can say I have made progress, but I ought to be able to get along more quickly. The principal motive for writing you now is to ask you if you know of any reason why I should not go to see Mr. Tersteeg and Mauve. I think it would be to my advantage to go to The Hague for a time. But if I knew for certain that Mr. Tersteeg would rather I did not go there, it might make me change my mind. What do you think about it?

I have seen little of Van Rappard, because it seemed to me that he did not like to be disturbed. As long as I am not more advanced, I must avoid young artists, who do not always reflect on what they do or say. And yet I long very much to find one who, being more advanced than I, could help me progress.

Well, tell me if you see any insurmountable obstacle to my going to The Hague for a while, and if perhaps you know any other course, in case I am prevented from going there.

I shake hands, awaiting a somewhat quicker reply,

Vincent