

Letter 024

25 Bedford Street, Strand, London, 6 April 1875

Dear Theo,

Thanks for your letter. I copied in your little book "Meeresstille" [Calm Sea] by Heine, didn't I? Some time ago I saw a picture by Thijs Maris that reminded me of it. It represents an old Dutch town with rows of brownish-red houses with stepped gables and high stoops; grey roofs; and white or yellow doors, window frames and cornices. There are canals with ships and a large white drawbridge under which a barge with a man at the tiller passes the little house of the bridge-keeper, who is seen through the window, sitting alone in his little office. Farther on is a stone bridge across the canal, over which some people and a cart with white horses are passing.

And there is life everywhere: a porter with his wheelbarrow; a man leaning against the railing of the bridge and looking into the water; women in black with white bonnets.

In the foreground is a brick-paved quay with a black rail; in the distance a church spire rises above the houses. A greyish white sky is above.

It is a small picture, and the artist was looking down on the scene. The subject is almost the same as that of the big J. Maris, "Amsterdam," which you probably know; but this is talent and the other, genius.

I have copied a few more things for you which I will send when I have a chance.

Don't forget "La Falaise" and anything else you may happen to think of. That Victor Hugo is splendid. À Dieu; my love to Father if you see him.

Vincent