

Letter 010a
London, 7 August 1893

[Letter to the Van Stockum – Haanebeek family]

Dear friends,

It was a pleasant surprise to me to receive Carolien's letter. Thanks. With all my heart I hope she is quite well again; a good thing it is over now!

In your next letter I should like to hear more about that last play you wrote. I was really amazed: for ten characters – it must be the biggest you have done.

These last days I have greatly enjoyed reading the poems of John Keats; he is a poet who, I think, is not very well known in Holland. He is the favourite of all the painters here, and so I started reading him. Here is something by him. His best-known piece is "The Eve of St. Agnes," but it is a bit too long to copy.

I have visited neither Crystal Palace nor the Tower yet, nor Tussod¹; I am not in a hurry to see everything. For the present I am quite satisfied with the museums, parks, etc.; they interest me more.

Last Monday I had a nice day. The first Monday in August is a holiday here. I went with one of the Germans to Dulwich, an hour and a half outside L., to see the museum there, and after that we took about an hour's walk to another village.

The country is so beautiful here; many people who have their businesses in London live in some village outside L. and go to town by train every day; perhaps I shall do the same shortly, if I can find a cheap room somewhere. But moving is so horrible that I shall stop here as long as possible, although everything is not so beautiful as it seemed to me in the beginning. Perhaps it is my own fault, so I shall bear with it a little longer.

Pardon me if this letter is not as I should like it to be, for I am writing in a hurry. I wanted to congratulate you on Willem's birthday and wish you many happy returns.

I was most pleased to learn that you have renewed your acquaintance with the Tersteeg family. I have been hoping you would for a long time.

When you have a chance, please let me know what photographs you have received – I am curious to know.

I have had a letter from Marinus, from which I learned that he is going to Amsterdam. This will mean a great change for him; I hope he will do well. I was very glad he wrote me.

A few days ago a brother of Iterson's paid me a call, and for the first time since May I had a chance to speak Dutch. We live far apart, much to my regret.

Good luck to you. Remember me to all in the Poten. Good luck!

Yours truly, Vincent

Gladden my heart with a letter as soon as you can find time.

[Enclosed]

THE EVE OF SAINT MARK (Unfinished)

Upon a Sabbath-day it fell;
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
That call'd the folk to evening prayer;

The chilly sunset faintly told
Of unmatur'd green vallies cold,
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
Of rivers new with spring-time sedge,
Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
Of daisies on the aguish hill.

Bertha was a maiden fair,
Dwelling in the old Minister-square;
From her fire-side she could see,
Sidelong its rich antiquity,
Far as the bishop's garden-wall;

Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,
Full-leav'd, the forest had outstript,
By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,
So shelter'd by the mighty pile.

All was silent, all was gloom,
Abroad and in the homely room;
Down she sat, poor cheated soul!
And struck a lamp from dismal coal;
Lean'd forward, with bright drooping hair,
And slant book, full against the glare.

Untir'd she read, her shadow still
Glower'd about, as it would fill
The room with wildest forms and shades,
As though some ghostly queen of spades
Had come to mock behind her back,
And dance, and ruffle her garments black;
Untir'd she read the legend page,
Of Holy Mark, from youth to age,
On land, on sea, in pagan chains,
Rejoicing for his many pains...

JOHN KEATS (1818)

The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream: "He awoke and found it truth."

[Written on the back of the same page]

AUTUMN

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend to the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core.
Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, -
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue...

1. Madame Tussaud's Wax Works.