

Letter 363
Nuenen, c. 26 March 1884

Dear Theo,

I am rather surprised that I haven't heard from you, seeing as you wrote, "if it inconveniences you to wait, write me by return mail."

Well, I wrote to tell you that it certainly did inconvenience me to wait longer – but I got no direct answer to that. The purport of my letter was exactly that, as I thought too much half-heartedness was creeping into our friendship, it was not stimulating, etc., which I need not repeat. It is certainly a bad economy, time is money too, and as I even have to wait for my colours, it is perfectly absurd in my opinion. But you know all that – after all my business is not your business – and if you do not understand it of your own accord, why should I lose patience and time harping on it?

As long as there is any spirit left in me, you can hardly expect me to agree to this slackening more and more.

You should carefully train yourself in that system of prudence and respectability and all the rest of it, for then you will make great progress – precisely in the direction of mediocrity, I mean to say. The one leads to the other – straight. Not because I say so – but because one has only to open one's eyes and take the trouble to look about one to see it happen a thousand times.

But I hear that your friend Braat has fallen ill – (in fact I always found him so during the short time I knew him) – perhaps that was the reason you forgot it – well.

However it may be, be so kind as to answer my last letter, and to let me know whether or not you will change it in that way.

Mother is gradually improving.

Goodbye,

Yours sincerely, Vincent

In the normal case of being on good terms with each other there could never be any question of stipulating that we should not meddle with each other's private affairs, and if you felt the least bit of warmth for my work you would not neglect it absolutely. And I write you as I do more particularly to make you feel how cold you have become toward what we undertook together full of courage, and moreover that too much coldly respectable diplomacy is creeping into your life – I say this much more emphatically than I would if I attached much value to an agreement being more or less fixed.

The real cause of the question is understanding or misunderstanding each other – a question of coolness or warmth of feeling between us.

And I find what Zola says about "dragging on a connection" as true as you do – it deadens all energy. But the question remains, What is the cause of this dragging on?

I, for my part, who like to live in the country rather than the city, certainly do not want to break with you; but as it is now, when I see that notwithstanding my working all day long I do not get any further with you, I cannot stand it, as I see in it a neglect of my own affairs, for which, after all, *I* should be responsible later on. Will you see to it that my work is brought under the eyes of those people who, if not now then later on, must become its buyers? – all right – then! I need not bother about it, and only have to occupy myself with my painting.

But leaving it alone the way you do is negligence. If you want to think this conceited of me – well, that's your own business – but for myself I think you conceited where there is no occasion for it. Because of the very fact that again this month you haven't the money for the usual remittance, you may as well reflect whether playing the big bug will get us anywhere.

If I did not feel more strongly every day that I must earn some money, I should keep my studies quietly for myself, as Rappard does. But, as you say, we are not in Rappard's position – but for all that I am getting more and more cramped. Today I brought home my ninth painted study of a weaver; painting costs money, and when I have to wait for the colours – as it now happens over and over again – I lose time. And look here – if you had a little more interest in it, we should have what we need. And what kind of impression will it make on others if you act like this? Truly, this is not conducive to inspiring confidence.