

Letter 206
The Hague, 8 or 9 June 1882
Municipal Hospital (4 class ward No. 9)

Dear Theo,

If you come here towards the end of June, you will find me at work again, I hope; for the time being I am in the hospital, where I shall stay only a fortnight, however. For three weeks I have been suffering from insomnia and low fever, and passing water was painful. And now it seems that I really have what they call the “clap,” but only a mild case.

So now I have to stay quietly in bed here, swallow many quinine pills, and also have injections now and then, either of pure water or of alum water, so it is as harmless as can be. Therefore you need not worry at all about it. But you know, one must not neglect such things, and should have them attended to at once, because neglect only aggravates it. Witness Breitner, who is still here, though in another ward, and perhaps he will leave soon; he doesn't know I'm here. You will do me a favour by not talking about it, for people sometimes exaggerate so, and gossip makes things seem worse. You're the only one I'm telling exactly what it is; you needn't keep it a secret if anyone should ask you directly, and at all events you needn't get alarmed about it.

Of course I had to pay a fortnight in advance, 10.50 guilders for all expenses. There is no difference as to food or treatment between the persons who are free patients and those who pay 10.50 guilders; there are ten patients in a ward, and I can only say that the treatment is very good in all respects. I do not feel bored at all, and the rest and the thoroughly practical, intensive medical treatment do me good.

If it is convenient, be so kind as to send 50 fr. about June 20 to the above-mentioned address, but not by registered mail. You know that I received 100 fr. on June 1. So then I shall be safe no matter what happens. If I have to stay longer, I will pay extra and stay on, and if not, I shall have the money to start work again. Of course I should prefer to start working in a fortnight, and within a fortnight I shall certainly be longing for a walk in the dunes.

Sien comes to see me on visiting days and keeps an eye on the studio.

Now you should know that the day before I came here, I received a letter from C. M. in which he wrote a whole lot about the “interest” he has in me, and which he says Mr. Tersteeg has also shown me, but he did not approve of my having been so ungrateful to Tersteeg for his marks of sympathy. It may be so. I am lying here calmly and quietly enough, but I can tell you, Theo, that I should certainly lose my temper if some person or other came to see me again with the kind of interest Tersteeg has shown me on certain occasions. And when I think how he pushed his interest so far as to have the nerve to compare me with an opium smoker, then I am still astonished that for my part I did not show him my interest in the form of a “go to hell.”

Speaking of smoking opium – the comfort and the luxury, the kind of glory in which H. G. T. moves, and a reasonably strong dose of flattery people in general administer to him, these are the things which drug his Honour more than he himself is conscious of.

In short, notwithstanding the superficial elegance of his behaviour, notwithstanding his superficially refined manners, his nice clothes, etc., etc., when thinking them over, and also recalling them to my mind, I find something “false” in his Honour's character. I wish it were otherwise, but I cannot speak differently.

Without doubting for a moment that his Honour is a clever man, another question is important to my respecting him. Is he a good man? That is to say, a man who does not nurture hatred, grudges, chicanery, sarcasm in his mind merely on principle. That is the question.

I did not answer C. M.'s last letter, nor shall I. However, I appreciate his saying that sometime he will buy from me again out of interest, especially if he means it, which remains to be seen.

Of course a letter from you would make me very happy these days. Sien is getting ready to go to Leyden. I often think of her – I am expecting her now – I hope she will pull through safely.

I have fought against being ill as long as I could, and continued working, but at last I felt it was urgent to consult a doctor.

But this morning he again told me that I would soon be better.

I am the less sorry to be lying quietly here for a few days, seeing that in case I should need to, I should be able to get an official statement from the doctor here to the effect that I am not the person to be sent to Gheel or to be put under guardianship.

And if this should not be enough, another one, if I were to take the trouble, from the Medical Director of the Lying-in Hospital at Leyden, a professor.

But perhaps those people who might possibly feel the urge to declare that it would be such a great advantage to society or to the family if someone like me were declared insane or put under guardianship are such awfully big bugs that they know much more about those things than, for instance, the doctor here. Enfin.

Did you receive the two little drawings?

Adieu, a handshake, and wishing you as much prosperity as a man can stand,

Yours, Vincent

I feel obliged to tell you again that in case they want to attempt something like putting me under guardianship on physical grounds, the precedent of the Gheel affair would make it awkward for the family suddenly to take a different stand, and base their action no longer on physical but on financial grounds. Such things don't cut any ice. But I repeat, I hope things will not be pushed as far as that.

But please write soon, for I am anxiously looking forward to a letter from you. You understand, Theo, that I don't talk about family matters with either the physician here or the professor at Leyden – only seeing that I am being treated by the former and Sien, by the latter, if I needed it, one word would get me a statement from these gentlemen, contradicting a possible differing statement by some persons you spoke of.