

Dear Theo,

I tore up a letter I had first written you, that's why you will get my answer somewhat later. I begin by thanking you for the 50 fr., which I appreciate, as I do everything you do for me. But as I began to say, your letter disappoints me, as you do not comply with my request, for I stick to my opinion that the reasons I gave you in my last letter for coming sooner were quite logical. But as I will not quarrel about it after all, I only beg you to reconsider it.

With regard to Cormon, it is decidedly better for me to go on drawing from the plaster casts than to work out-of-doors, because the better I memorize the structure of the figure the better I shall be able to follow the course. I shall have to do with people who have drawn from the casts for years; if I do it for months it will not be too long. I am perhaps more daring in dashing things off, and in grasping the whole, than many others, because I have always worked from nature.

But the others may have more knowledge of the nude, for which I haven't had the opportunity. The sooner I make up for that the better, the more I shall be able to profit from working at Cormon's.

Then my health, I do not eat when I'm working outdoors, and I cannot get well. For I frequently relapse; my health is far from being what it ought to be.

Now as to the expenses, I believe it will be pretty much the same. So just think it over again – we must act, for we must put our shoulders to the wheel.

All the time I have been here, I have had a comrade, an old Frenchman, and I have painted his portrait, which Verlat approved of, and which you will see. The winter was even worse for him than for me, and the poor devil is much worse off than I am because his age makes it very critical. Today I went with him to the same doctor whom I had been to myself, and probably he will have to go to the hospital and undergo an operation, which will be decided tomorrow. At last I had persuaded him to do it, but he was so nervous about it that it took a long time to persuade him to go and hear his sentence.

He knew that it was going to be rather serious, and he dared not entrust himself to the hospital doctor.

I wonder what will be decided. It is possible that for his sake I shall stay here a few days longer in March. After all, there is nothing in the world as interesting as people, and one can never study them enough. And that's why people like Turgenev are such great masters, because they teach us to observe.

The books of today since Balzac, for instance, are different from all that was written in the preceding centuries, and perhaps more beautiful.

I am longing especially for Turgenev, because I have read an article by Daudet about him, in which both his character and his work were analyzed – very beautifully.

For he is exemplary as a man, and in his old age he was as young as ever as far as working on was concerned, for he was dissatisfied with himself and always trying to do better and better.

Goodbye, but think it over carefully – it would be such a relief if you could see this matter the way I do.

And I should not insist so much if I did not think it necessary to continue drawing from the casts without interruption, especially with regard to June. Well, write soon. I would much rather paint something else, but as a practical matter it cannot be avoided.

With a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent

Because I think that after all my stay in Antwerp has been useful to me I believe that we must go straight on.