

I – Lovers and Gamblers have Something in Common

Saint-Evremond to Ninon de l'Enclos:

I have been trying for more than a year to obtain news of you from everybody, but nobody can give me any. M. de la Bastille tells me that you are in good health, but adds, that if you have no more lovers, you are satisfied to have a greater number of friends.

The falsity of the former piece of news casts a doubt upon the verity of the latter, because you are born to love as long as you live. Lovers and gamblers have something in common: Who has loved will love. If I had been told that you had become devout, I might have believed it, for that would be to pass from a human passion to the love of God, and give occupation to the soul. But not to love, is a species of void, which cannot be consistent with your heart.

Ce repos languissant ne fut jamais un bien;
C'est trouver sans mouvoir l'état où l'on
nest rien.

('Twas never a good this languishing rest;
'Tis to find; without search a state far from
blest.)

I want to know about your health, your occupations, your inclinations, and let it be in a long enough letter, with moralizing and plenty of affection for your old friend.

The news here is that the Count de Grammont is dead, and it fills me with acute sorrow.

If you know Barbin, ask him why he prints so many things, which are not mine, over my name? I have been guilty of enough folly without assuming the burden of others. They have made me the author of a diatribe against Père Bouhours, which I never even imagined. There is no writer whom I hold in higher esteem. Our language owes more to him than to any other author.

God grant that the rumor of Count de Grammont's death be false, and that of your health true. The Gazette de Hollande says the Count de Lauzun is to be married. If this were true he would have been summoned to Paris, besides, de Lauzun is a Duke, and the name "Count" does not fit him.

Adieu. I am the truest of your servants, who would gain much if you had no more lovers, for I would be the first of your friends, despite an absence that may be called eternal.