

## *XVI – The Memory of Youth*

*Saint-Evremond to Ninon de l'Enclos:*

I was handed in December, the letter you wrote me October 14. It is rather old, but good things are always acceptable, however late they may be in reaching us. You are serious; therefore you please. You add a charm to Seneca, who does not usually possess any. You call yourself old when you possess all the graces, inclinations, and spirit of youth.

I am troubled with a curiosity which you can satisfy: When you remember your past, does not the memory of your youth suggest certain ideas, as far removed from languor and sloth as from the excitement of passion? Do you not feel in your soul a secret opposition to the tranquillity that you fancy your spirit has acquired?

Mais aimer et vous voir aimée  
Est une douce liaison,  
Que dans notre coeur s'est formée  
De concert avec la raison.  
D'une amoureuse sympathie,  
Il faut pour arrêter le cours

Arrêter celui de nos jours;  
Sa fin est celle de la vie.  
Puissent les destins complaisants,  
Vous donner encore trente ans  
D'amour et de philosophie.

(To love and be loved  
Is a concert sweet,  
Which in your heart is formed  
Cemented with reason meet.  
Of a loving concord,  
To stop the course,  
Our days must end perforce,  
And death be the last record.  
May the kind fates give  
You thirty years to live,  
With wisdom and love in accord.)

I wish you a happy New Year, a day on which those who have nothing else to give, make up the deficiency in wishes.