

## *XVII – “I Should Have Hanged Myself”*

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

Your letter filled with useless yearnings of which I thought myself incapable. “The days are passing,” as said the good man of Yveteaux, “in ignorance and sloth; these days destroy us and take from us the things to which we are attached.” You are cruelly made to prove this.

You told me long ago that I should die of reflections. I try not to make any more, and to forget on the morrow the things I live through today. Everybody tells me that I have less to complain of at one time than at another. Be that as it may, had I been proposed such a life, I should have hanged myself. We hold on to an ugly body, however, as something agreeable; we love to feel comfort and ease. Appetite is something I still enjoy. Would to Heaven I could try my stomach with yours, and talk of the old friends we have known, the memory of whom

gives me more pleasure than the presence of many people I now meet. There is something good in all that, but to tell you the truth, there is no comparison.

M. de Clérambault often asks me if he resembles his father in mental attainments. “No,” I always answer him, but I hope from his presumption that he believes this “no” to be of advantage to him, and perhaps there are some who would have so considered it. What a comparison between the present epoch and that through which we have passed!

You are going to write Madame Sandwich, but I believe she has gone to the country. She knows all about your sentiment for her. She will tell you more news about this country than I, having gauged and comprehended everything. She knows all my haunts and has found means of making herself perfectly at home.