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Letter 106

Letter 108

*Rica to ****

The role of a pretty woman is much more weighty than people think. There is nothing more serious than what takes place in the morning at her toilet in the midst of her servants ; a general of the army does not use more care in placing his right wing or his reserve corps than she does to wearing a mouche that may fail, but that she hopes or foresees will succeed. [1]

How taxing for the mind ! What attention to reconciling constantly the interests of two rivals in order to appear neutral to both while she yields to them both, and make herself the mediator on all the subjects of complaint she gives them !

What an occupation to keep one diversion coming on the heels of another, to make them constantly follow and begin again, and forestall any accidents that might break them off !

With all that, the greatest trouble is not to be entertained, but to appear to be : bore them as much as you want, they will forgive you, provided one can believe they have had a marvelous time.

A few days ago I was at a supper that some ladies held in the country. Along the way they were constantly saying : At least we must have some good laughs and a very good time.

We happened to be ill matched, and consequently rather serious. You must admit, said one of these women, that we are having a great time ; there is no party today in Paris as gay as ours. As I was succumbing to boredom, one woman shook me, and said : Well, aren't we in good humor now ? Yes, I replied with a yawn, I think I shall die of laughter. Meanwhile sadness was winning out over the observations ; and for my part, I felt myself being led from one yawn to the next into a lethargic sleep that ended all my pleasures.

Paris this 11th day of the moon of Maharram 1718

Supplementary Letter V of the 1758 edition would be placed here

[1] On the use of the mouche see letter 96.