

*V – Love and Temper*

Oh, I agree with you, Marquis, a woman who has only temper and caprices is very thorny for an acquaintance and in the end only repels. I agree again that these irregularities must make of love a never-ending quarrel, a continual storm. Therefore, it is not for a person of this character that I advise you to form an attachment. You always go beyond my ideas. I only depicted to you in my last letter an amiable woman, one who becomes still more so by a shade of diversity; and you speak only of an unpleasant woman, who has nothing but ungracious things to say. How we have drifted away from the point!

When I spoke of temper I only meant the kind that gives a stronger relish, anxiety, and a little jealousy – that, in a word, which springs from love alone, and not from natural brutality, that roughness which one ordinarily calls “bad temper.” When it is love that makes a woman rough, when that alone is the cause of her liveliness, what sort can the lover be, who has so little delicacy as to complain of it? Do not these errors prove the violence of passion? For myself, I have always thought that he, who knew how to keep himself within proper bounds, was moderately amorous. Can one be so, in effect, without allowing himself to be goaded by the

fire of a devouring impetuosity, without experiencing all the revolutions which it necessarily occasions? No, undoubtedly. Well! who can see all these disturbances in a beloved object without a secret pleasure? While complaining of its injustice and its transports, one feels no less deliciously at heart that he is loved, and with passion, and that these same aggravations are most convincing proofs that it is voluntary.

There, Marquis, is what constitutes the secret charm of the troubles that lovers sometimes suffer, of the tears they shed. But if you are going to believe that I wished to tell you that a woman of bad temper, capricious, could make you happy, undeceive yourself. I said, and I shall always persist in my idea, that diversity is necessary, caprices, bickerings, in a gallant intercourse, to drive away weariness, and to perpetuate the strength of it. But consider that these spices do not produce that effect except when love itself is the source. If temper is born of a natural brusqueness, or of a restless, envious, unjust disposition, I am the first one to say that such a woman will become hateful; she will be the cause of disheartening quarrels. A connection of the heart becomes then a veritable torment, from which it is desirable to free oneself as quickly as possible.