

## *XI – The Distinction Between Love and Friendship*

I was delighted with your letter, Marquis. Do you know why? Because it gives me speaking proof of the truth of what I have been preaching to you these latter days. Ah! for once you have forgotten all your metaphysics. You picture to me the charms of the Countess, with a complacency that demonstrates that your sentiments are not altogether so high flown as you would have me believe, and as you think down in your heart. Tell me frankly: if your love were not the work of the senses, would you take so much pleasure in considering that form – those eyes which enchant you, that mouth which you describe to me in such glowing colors? If the qualities of heart and mind alone seduce you, a woman of fifty is worth still more in that respect than the Countess. You see such a one every day, it is her mother; why not become enamored of her instead? Why neglect a hundred women of her age, of her plainness, and of her merit, who make advances to you, and who would enact the same rôle with you that you play with the Countess? Why do you desire with so much passion to be distinguished by her from other men? Why are you uneasy when she shows them the least courtesy? Does her esteem for them diminish that which she pretends for you? Are rivalries and jealousies recognized in metaphysics? I believe not. I have friends, and I do not observe such things in them; I feel none in my own heart when they love other women.

Friendship is a sentiment that has nothing to do with the senses; the soul alone receives the impression of it, and the soul loses nothing of its value by giving itself up to several at the same time. Compare friendship with love, and you will perceive the difference between a desire that governs a friend, and that that offers itself

to a lover. You will confess that, at heart, I am not so unreasonable as you at first thought, and that it might be very well if it should happen that in love you might have a soul as worldly as that of a good many people, whom it pleases you to accuse of very little refinement.

I do not wish, however, to bring men alone to trial. I am frank, and I am quite sure that if women would be honest, they would soon confess that they are not a bit more refined than men. Indeed, if they saw in love only the pleasures of the soul, if they hoped to please only by their mental accomplishments and their good character, honestly, now, would they apply themselves with such particular care to please by the charms of their person? What is a beautiful skin to the soul, an elegant figure, and a well-shaped arm? What contradictions between their real sentiments and those they exhibit on parade! Look at them, and you will be convinced that they have no intention of making themselves valued except by their sensual attractions, and that they count everything else as nothing. Listen to them: you will be tempted to believe that it is not worldly things that they consider the least. I think I deserve credit for trying to dispel your error in this respect; and ought I not to expect everything from the care they will take to undeceive you themselves? Perhaps they will succeed only too easily in expressing sentiments entirely contrary to those you have heard today from me.

I am due at Mademoiselle de Raymond's this evening, to hear the two Camus and Ytier, who are going to sing. Mesdames de la Sablière, de Salins, and de Monsoreau will also be there. Would you miss such a fine company?