

XII – A Man in Love is an Amusing Spectacle

You take things too much to heart, Marquis – already two nights that you have not slept. Oh! it is true love, there is no mistaking that. You have made your eyes speak; you, yourself, have spoken quite plainly, and not the slightest notice has been taken of your condition. Such behavior calls for revenge. Is it possible that after eight whole days of devoted attention she has not given you the least hope? Such a thing cannot be easily imagined. Such a long resistance begins to pass beyond probability. The Countess is a heroine of the last century. But if you are beginning to lose patience, you can imagine the length of time you would have had to surer, if you had continued to proclaim grand and noble sentiments. You have already accomplished more in eight days than the late Celadon could in eight months. However, to speak seriously, are your complaints just? You call the Countess ungrateful, insensible, disdainful, etc. But by what right do you talk thus? Will you never believe what I have told you a hundred times? Love is a veritable caprice, involuntary, even in one who experiences its pangs. Why should you say that the beloved object is bound to recompense a blind sentiment acquired without her connivance? You are very queer, you men. You consider yourselves offended because a woman does not respond with eagerness to the languishing looks you deign to cast upon her. Your revolted pride immediately accuses her of injustice, as if it were her fault that your head is turned; as if she were obliged, at a certain stage, to be seized with the same disease as you. Tell me this: is the Countess responsible if she is not afflicted with the same delirium

as soon as you begin to rave? Cease, then, to accuse her and to complain, and to try to communicate your malady to her; I know you, you are seductive enough. Perhaps she will feel, too soon for her peace of mind, sentiments commensurate with your desires. I believe she has in her everything to subjugate you, and to inspire you with the taste I hope will be for your happiness, but so far, I do not think she is susceptible of a very serious attachment.

Vivacious, inconsistent, positive, decided, she cannot fail to give you plenty of exercise. An attentive and caressing woman would weary you; you must be handled in a military fashion, if you are to be amused and retained. As soon as the mistress assumes the rôle of lover, love begins to weaken; it does more, it rises like a tyrant, and ends in disdain, which leads directly to disgust and inconstancy. Have you found, perchance, everything you required in the little mistress who is the cause of your dolorous martyrdom? Poor Marquis! What storms will blow over you. What quarrels I foresee! How many vexations, how many threats to leave her! But do not forget this: So much emotion will become your punishment, if you treat love after the manner of a hero of romance, and you will meet a fate entirely the contrary if you treat it like a reasonable man.

But ought I to continue to write you? The moments you employ to read my letters will be so many stolen from love. Great Heavens I how I should like to be a witness of your situations! Indeed, for a sober-minded person, is there a spectacle more amusing than the contortions of a man in love?