

*XLVIII – Friendship Must Be Firm*

I do not conceal it, Marquis: your conduct in regard to the Countess had put me out of patience with you, and I was tempted to break off all my relations with so wicked a man as you. My good nature in yielding to your entreaties inclines me to the belief that my friendship for you borders on a weakness. You are right, though. To be your friend only so long as you follow my advice would not be true friendship. The more you are to be censured, the stronger ought to be my hold on you, but you will understand that one is not master of his first thoughts. Whatever effort I may make to find you less

guilty, the sympathy I have for the misfortune of my friend is of still greater importance to me. There were moments when I could not believe in your innocence, and they were when so charming a woman complained of you. Now that her situation is improving every day, I consider my harshness in my last letter almost as a crime.

I shall, hereafter, content myself with pitying her without importuning you any longer about her. So let us resume our ordinary gait, if it please you. You need no longer fear my reproaches; I see they would be useless as well as out of place.