

VOLANGES & MARQUIS

Volanges: You have such a very good influence on her.

Marquis: I like to think so, but what do you suppose is the matter?

Volanges: Didn't she tell you?

Marquis: No. We merely spoke of how she was enjoying the country.

Volanges: That makes me even more certain of the cause of her unhappiness. She's pining for that young man. I'm afraid it's beginning to affect her health.

Marquis: Do you think so?

Volanges: This morning, I simply asked her how she'd slept, and she threw herself into my arms and wept. *(beat)* My dear, I'd be grateful if you would allow me to discuss this with you seriously. I've been brooding about it all day, and now I really feel I need your advice.

Marquis: My dear friend, please, I'd be proud to think I could be of any help to you.

Volanges: Well. I've been reconsidering. I really think perhaps I should break off Cecile's engagement with Monsieur le Comte de Gercourt. He is undoubtedly a better match than Danceny, but the family, after all, is not decisively superior. Danceny is not rich, of course, but I dare say Cecile is rich enough for them both. And the most important thing is that they love each other. Don't you agree? *(Marquis thinks fast but doesn't show it)* You think I'm wrong?

Marquis: I have every confidence that your eventual decision will be the right one. If I were able to take a more objective view of the situation, it would only be because, in this case, I am not affected by the altogether praiseworthy emotion of maternal love.

Volanges: Please go on. I do rely on your judgment.

Marquis: Well. It seems to me a question of distinguishing what's correct from what's pleasurable. To say this young man is entitled to your daughter just because of his passion for her is a little like saying a thief is entitled to your money. I'm not at all sure how appropriate an emotion of love is, particularly within marriage. I believe friendship, trust and mutual respect are infinitely more important.

Volanges: And you don't approve of Danceny?

Marquis: There's no denying that, as suitors, there can be no comparison between them. I know money isn't everything, but will sixty thousand a year really be sufficient to maintain the kind of establishment Cecile will be obliged to run, even as Madame Danceny? Of course, I wouldn't dream of suggesting in any way that Danceny has allowed himself to be influenced by financial considerations ...

Volanges: But ...

Marquis: Precisely. *(beat)* But, as I say, this is only my opinion. Naturally, it's your decision.

Volanges: Yes.

Marquis: Perhaps you ought not to take it on the strength of a single outburst, which might have any number of, well, medical explanations for example.

Volanges: Perhaps you're right.

Marquis: In any event, I hope we can discuss it further when we're all back in Paris.

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