Madam La Marquise

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(Robert W. Service)

Said Hongray de la Glaciere unto his proud Papa:
"I want to take a wife mon Père," The Marquis laughed: "Ha! Ha!
And whose, my son?" he slyly said; but Hongray with a frown
Cried, "Fi! Papa, I mean - to wed, I want to settle down."
The Marquis de la Glaciere responded with a smile;
"You're young my boy; I much prefer that you should wait awhile."
But Hongray sighed: "I cannot wait, for I am twenty-four;
And I have met my blessed fate: I worship and adore.
Such beauty, grace and charm has she, I'm sure you will approve,
For if I live a century none other can I love."
"I have no doubt," the Marquis shrugged, "that she's a proper pet;
But has she got a decent *dot*, and is she of our set?"
"Her *dot*," said Hongray, "will suffice; her family you know.
The girl with whom I fain would splice is Mirabelle du Veau."

What made the Marquis start and stare, and clutch his perfumed beard?
Why did he stagger to a chair and murmur: "As I feared?"
Dilated were his eyes with dread, and in a voice of woe
He wailed: "My son, you cannot wed with Mirabelle du Veau."
"Why not? my Parent," Hongray cried. "Her name's without a slur.
Why should you look so horrified that I should wed with her?"
The Marquis groaned: "Unhappy lad! Forget her if you can,
And see in your respected Dad a miserable man."
"What is the matter? I repeat," said Hongray growing hot.
"She's witty, pretty, rich and sweet... Then- mille diables!- what?"
The Marquis moaned: "Alas! that I your dreams of bliss should banish;
It happened in the days gone-by, when I was Don Juanish.
Her mother was your mother's friend, and we were much together.
Ah well! You know how such things end. (I blame it on the weather.)
We had a very sultry spell. One day, mon Dieu! I kissed her.
My son, you can't wed Mirabelle. She is... she is your sister."

So broken-hearted Hongray went and roamed the world around,
Till hunting in the Occident forgetfulness he found.
Then quite recovered, he returned to the paternal
For I have found the mate divine, the one, the perfect girl.
She's healthy, wealthy, witching, wise, with loveliness serene.
And proud am I to win a prize, half angel and half queen."
"'Tis time to wed," the Marquis said, "You must be twenty-seven.
But who is she whose lot may be to make your life a heaven?"
"A friend of childhood," Hongray cried. "For whom regard you feel.

The maid I fain would be my bride is Raymonde de la Veal."

The Marquis de la Glaciere collapsed upon the floor,
And all the words he uttered were: "Forgive me, I implore.
My sins are heavy on my head. Profound remorse I feel.
My son, you simply cannot wed with Raymonde de la Veal."
Then Hongray spoke voice that broke, and corrugated brow:
"Inform me, Sir, why you demur. What is the matter now?"
The Marquis wailed: "My wicked youth! Ah! how it gives me pain.
But let me tell the awful truth, my agony explain...
A cursed Casanova I; a finished flirt her mother;
And so alas! it came to pass we fell for one another:
Our lives were blent in bl

Again sore-stricken Hongray fled, and sought his grief to smother,
And as he writhed upon his bed to him there came his Mother.
The Marquise de la Glaciere was snowy-haired and frigid.
Her wintry features chiselled were, her manner stiff and rigid.
The pride of race was in her face, her bearing high and stately,
And sinking down by Hongray's side she spoke to him sedately:
"What ails you so, my precious child? What throngs of sorrow smite you?
Why are your eyes so wet and wild? Come tell me, I invite you."
"Ah! if I told you, Mother dear," said Hongray with a shiver,
"Another's honour would, I fear, be in the soup forever."
"Nay trust," she begged, "My only boy, the fond Mama who bore you.
Perhaps I may, your grief alloy. Please tell me, I implore you."

And so his story Hongray told, in accents choked and muffled.
The Marquise listened calm and cold, her visage quite unruffled.
He told of Mirabelle du Veau, his agony revealing.
For Raymonde de la Veal his woe was quite beyond concealing.
And still she sat
Then Hongray finished up: "For life my hopes are doomed to slaughter;
For if I choose another wife, she's sure to be his daughter."
The Marquise rose. "Cheer up," said she, "the last word is not spoken.
A Mother cannot sit and see her boy's heart rudely broken.
So dry your tears and calm your fears; no longer need you tarry;
To-day your bride you may decide, to-morrow you may marry.
Yes, you may wed with Mirabelle, or Raymonde if you'd rather...
For I as well the truth may tell...Papa is not your father."

dot - dowry (French, of course)

While this is reputed to have been written by Service, I have not found what I consider to be satisfactory verification of authorship. Supposedly, this was in a 1940 book by Service titled "Bar-Room Ballads," but I have not yet found the book. JRO

(related to the song "Johnny Be Fair")

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Also see "Shame and Scandal" and "Elma Turl" and "Mixed Up Family"

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