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Letter 132	Letter 134
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Rica to the same

Here is a great example of conjugal affection, not only in a woman, but in a queen. The queen of Sweden, determined to associate her husband the prince to the crown, in order to smooth out all the difficulties sent to the Estates a declaration by which she withdraws from the regency should he be elected. [1]

Sixty-some years ago another queen named Christina abdicated the throne to devote herself wholly to philosophy. [2] I do not know which of these two examples should cause us the most wonder.

Although I rather approve that everyone should hold fast to the position in which nature has placed him, [3] and cannot praise the weakness of those who, finding themselves beneath their station, abandon it like a sort of desertion, I am nevertheless struck by the generosity of spirit of these two princesses, and to see the mind of the one and the heart of the other loftier than their fortune. Christina sought knowledge at a time when others seek only enjoyment ; and the other wanted to enjoy only to place all her happiness in the hands of her august spouse.

Paris this 27th day of the moon of Maharram 1720

[1] This event was current. After the death of Charles XII in December 1718, his sister Ulrica Eleanore, wife of prince Frederick von Hesse-Kassel, proclaimed her accession to the throne and convened the Estates of Sweden (see letter 130, note 7). But Swedish traditions excluded a married queen. She accepted to declare the throne vacant and to recognize the power of the Estates, after which she was elected queen of Sweden on 21 February 1719. She abdicated in favor of her husband on the 29th of the month, less than a month before the date borne by this letter of Rica's.

[2] Queen Christina (1626-1689) was renowned for her intelligence and for having attracted Descartes to her court (1649), but also for her intrigues and her sensational conversion to Catholicism : she left Sweden in 1654 and died in Rome, where she is buried in the basilica of St Peter.

[3] "Nature" in this instance would mean her royal blood. In the case of Ulrica Eleanore, who was married, the succession was less clear, but she was nevertheless the sister of Charles XII, and thereby inherited a certain obligation with respect to the state.