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Publication date: mercredi 15 avril 2020

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*Usbek to Ibben in Smyrna*

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Europe is much given to gambling. Being a gambler is a profession ; that title alone substitutes for birth, wealth, and probity ; it places every man who bears it in the rank of the upright without examination, even though there is no one who does not know that by so judging he has very often been mistaken. But all are agreed to be incorrigible.

The women especially are very fond of it. It is true that they scarcely practice it in their youth except to favor a dearer passion ; but as they age their passion for gambling seems to grow younger, and this passion fills the void of the others.

They want to ruin their husbands, and to achieve that they have means for all ages, from the tenderest youth to the most decrepit old age : clothes and carriages begin the disorder, coquetry augments it, and gambling completes it.

I have often seen nine or ten women, or rather nine or ten centuries, seated around a table ; I have seen them in their expectations, in their fears, in their joys, and above all in their furies. You would have said that they would never have the time to calm down, and that life would leave them before their despair ; you would have been in doubt whether those they were paying were their creditors or their heirs.

It seems our holy Prophet had principally in mind to keep us from anything that can trouble our reason : he forbade us the use of wine, which keeps it submerged ; through a precept he expressly forbade us games of chance ; and when he was unable to remove the cause of passions, he buffered them. Love for us vehicles neither disorder nor fury ; it is a languorous passion which leaves our souls calm ; the plurality of wives saves us from their domination and tempers the violence of our desires.

*Paris this 18th day of the moon of Zilhagé 1714*