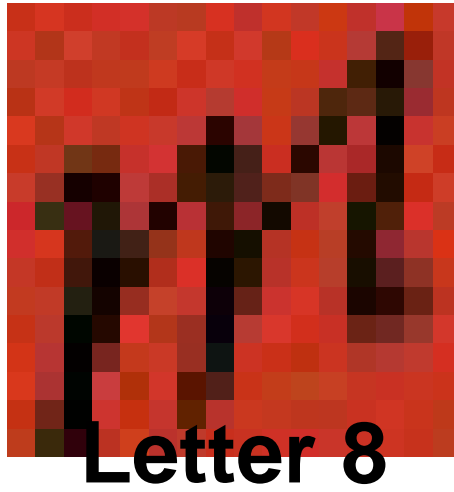


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Letter 8

Letter 7	Letter 9
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Usbek to his friend Rustan in Isfahan

I received your letter at Erzerum [1], where I am now. I had suspected my departure would get about ; I did not worry about it. What would you have me follow, the prudence of my enemies, or my own ?

I came to court in my earliest youth. My heart was not corrupted there ; I can say that ; I even conceived a great project : I dared to be virtuous. As soon as I was exposed to vice, I fled it, but then I approached it to unmask it. I carried truth to the very foot of the throne : there I spoke a language previously unknown ; I confounded flattery, to the simultaneous surprise of both the worshipers and the idol.

But when I saw that my sincerity had made me enemies ; that I had provoked the jealousy of the ministers without having the prince's favor ; that in a corrupt court I could was maintaining myself only with weak virtue, I determined to leave it. I feigned a great attachment for the sciences, and by dint of feigning, I actually acquired it. I no longer took part in any causes, and withdrew to a country house. But even this decision had its drawbacks ; I remained exposed to the malice of my enemies, and had almost surrendered the means of protecting myself from them. A few quiet warnings made me take my position seriously. I decided to leave my native land, and my withdrawal from the court itself provided me with a plausible pretext. I went to the king ; I informed him of my desire to study the sciences of the Occident ; I gave him to understand that he might derive some benefit from my travels. I found grace in his eyes : I departed, thus depriving my enemies of a victim.

This, Rustan, is the true reason for my journey. Let Isfahan talk ; defend me only before those who love me ; leave their malicious interpretations to my enemies : I am only too fortunate that that is all the harm they can do me.

Now they are talking about me ; maybe I will be only too forgotten, and my friends... No, Rustan, I do not wish to entertain such a sad thought : I shall always be dear to them ; I depend on their faithfulness, as on yours.

Erzerum this 20th day of the moon of Gemmadi II, 1711

[1] Thus outside of Persia.