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Supplementary Letter IV

- Persian Letters - Letters -

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Usbek to Rustan in Isfahan [1]

A personage is appearing here in the guise of Persian ambassador, insolently making fools of the two greatest kings on earth. To the monarch of the French he brings presents which ours would never offer to a king or Irimette or Georgia [2] : and in his niggardly miserliness he has stigmatized the majesty of two empires.

He made himself look ridiculous before a people that claims to be the most refined in Europe, and he has caused it to be said in the Occident that the king of kings [3] reigns only over barbarians.

He has received honors which it seemed that he himself wished had been refused to him. And, as if the French court had had Persian grandeur more at heart than he, it has made him appear with dignity before a people who hold him in contempt. [4]

Do not say this in Isfahan : spare the head of a poor bloke. I do not want our ministers to punish him for their own imprudence, and for the unworthy choice they have made. [5]

Paris this last day of the moon of Gemmadi II, 1715

[1] This letter first appeared in *Le Fantastique* (1745).

[2] See letter 27 and the note. Muhammad Riza Beg, *kalendar* (tax collector) of the province of Erivan, ambassador of the Persian king, made his solemn entry into Paris on 7 February 1715, and was received in Versailles by Louis XIV on 19 February. The disappointment produced by his presents and lack of formality was such that some thought him an imposter.

[3] See letter 49 and note.

[4] The magnificent reception on 19 February 1715 was painted by Coppel and described by Saint-Simon (vol. V, p. 171) and Maurice Herbette, *Une ambassade persane sous Louis XIV* (Paris : Perrin, 1905, p. 182). Usbek is more indulgent than Saint-Simon.

[5] In fact, Muhammad Reza Beg embarked at Le Havre on 12 September 1715 and reached Persia, but he poisoned himself before he got to Erivan because en route he had sold most of the presents from the French king (Herbette, *ibid.*, p. 327).