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XVI.2 That in southern countries there is a natural inequality between the two sexes

- The Spirit of Law - Book XVI. How the laws of domestic slavery, relate to the nature of the climate -
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XVI.2 That in southern countries there is a natural inequality between the two sexes

Women in warm climates are nubile at eight, nine or ten years of age [1] : thus childhood and marriage almost always go together. They are old at twenty : reason and beauty therefore never cohabit in them. When beauty wants domination, reason sees that it is denied ; when reason could obtain it, beauty is past. Women must be dependent, for reason cannot provide them in old age with an influence which beauty had not granted them even in youth. It is therefore no surprise that, when religion does not oppose it, a man should leave his wife to take another, and that polygamy should come into being.

In temperate countries, where the charms of women are better preserved, where they become nubile later, and have children at a more advanced age, the aging of their husband in a sense follows their own ; and since they have more reason and knowledge when they marry, if only because they have lived longer, a kind of equality must have naturally come into being in the two sexes, and consequently the law of a single wife.

In cold countries, the almost necessary consumption of strong drinks establishes intemperance among men. Women, who have some natural restraint in this regard because they always have to defend themselves, therefore also have the advantage of reason over them.

Nature, which has distinguished men by strength and reason, has placed no limit on their power other than the limits of that strength and that reason. She has given charms to women, and made things so that their ascendancy ends with those charms ; but in warm countries they are present only in the early stages, and never over the full course of their life.

Thus the law that allows only one wife conforms to the physical climate of Europe, and not to the physical climate of Asia. That is why Mohammedanism found it so easy to establish itself in Asia, and so difficult to spread to Europe ; why Christianity has maintained itself in Europe, and been destroyed in Asia ; and finally, why the Mohammedans are making such progress in China and Christians so little.

Some reasons particular to Valentinian [2] led him allow polygamy in the empire. That law, violent for our climates, was suppressed [3] by Theodosius, Arcadius, and Honorius.

[1] Mohammed married Cadigha at age five and slept with her at eight. In the hot countries of Arabia and the Indies, the girls are nubile at eight and bear children the next year (Prideaux, *Life of Mohammed*). Women in the realms of Alger are known to bear children at nine, ten and eleven years of age (Laugier de Tassy, *Histoire du royaume d'Alger*, p. 61).

[2] See Jordanes, *De regno et tempor. succes.*, and the ecclesiastical historians.

[3] See law 7 in the Cod. *De Judæis et Cælicolis*, and *Novella* 18, ch. v.