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Usbek to the same

The leniency of a government contributes marvelously to the propagation of the species. All republics are constant proof of this, and more than all Switzerland and Holland, which are the two worst countries in Europe considering the nature of the terrain, and which nevertheless are the most populous.

Nothing so attracts foreigners as freedom, and opulence, which always follows it : the first is sought after for itself, and needs attract people to countries where they find the latter.

The species multiplies in a country where plenty furnishes enough for children while taking nothing from the subsistence of the fathers.

Even the equality of citizens which ordinarily produces equality among fortunes, brings abundance and life to every part of the body politic, and shares it all around.

Such is not the case of countries subjected to arbitrary power : the prince, the courtiers, and some individuals possess all the wealth, while all the others groan in extreme poverty.

If a man is hard put, and feels his children will be poorer than he, he will not marry ; or if he marries, he will fear having too many children, who could put him in even more dire straits, and end up in a station lower than their father.

I admit that the rustic or peasant once being married will propagate indifferently, whether he is rich or poor ; this consideration does not affect him. He always has a sure heritage to leave to his children, which is his spade, and nothing ever prevents him from blindly following nature's instinct.

But what use to a state is all these children who languish in misery ? They almost all perish as quickly as they are born. They never prosper : frail and sickly, they die retail in a thousand ways, while they are carried off wholesale by the frequent contagious illnesses which poverty and malnutrition always produce. Those who survive them reach manhood without possessing its strength, and languish the whole rest of their lives.

Men are like plants that never grow well if they are not well cultivated : among wretched peoples the species loses, and even sometimes degenerates.

France can furnish a good example of all this. In past wars, the fear shared by all the children of a household that they will be enlisted in the militia obliged them to marry, [1] even at too tender an age and in the bosom of misery. From so many marriages issued many children who are still being sought in France, and whom misery, famine, and disease have made to disappear.

Now if under such happy skies, in a realm as civilized as France, such observations are made, what will it be like in other states ?

Letter 118

Paris this 23rd day of the moon of Rhamazan 1718

[1] The militia, constituted in 1688, was supposed to recruit only unmarried men between the ages of twenty and forty.