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- Persian Letters - Letters -

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<a href="#">Letter 110</a>	<a href="#">Letter 112</a>
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*Usbek to the same*

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The Romans had no fewer slaves than we, they even had more [\[1\]](#) ; but they made better use of them.

Far from preventing the multiplication of these slaves by forced means, they favored it on the contrary with all their power. They associated them as much as they could by sorts of marriages ; by this means they filled their houses with servants of every sex and age and the state with numberless people.

These children who in the long run constituted a master's wealth were born without number about him. He was solely responsible for their feeding and education ; the fathers, free from this burden, merely followed the penchant of nature, and multiplied without fear of too numerous a family.

I have told you that among us all the slaves are occupied guarding our women, and nothing else ; that they are insofar as the state is concerned in a perpetual lethargy, so the cultivation of the arts and the land has to be restricted to a few freemen and a few heads of household, and even they attend to them as little as possible.

This was not the case among the Romans : the republic made use with infinite advantage of this slave people. Each of them had his nest egg which he owned on conditions which his master imposed on him ; with that nest egg he worked, and went in the direction that his industry led him. One would be the banker, another would go into sea trade ; one would retail his merchandise, yet another apply himself to some mechanical art, or else farm out and exploit land ; but there was none who did not attach himself with all his power to making that nest egg grow, which provided him at the same time with comfort in his present servitude and the expectation of a future freedom. That made for a hard-working people, and stimulated the arts and initiative.

These slaves, enriched by their own effort and labor, obtained their liberation and became citizens. The republic was constantly re-supplied, and received in its bosom new families as quickly as the old ones became extinguished.

I shall perhaps have occasion in my following letters to prove to you that the more men there are in a state, the more commerce flourishes there ; I shall prove just as easily that the more commerce flourishes there, the more the number of men increases : these two things are mutually reinforcing, and necessarily favor each other.

If that is the case, how greatly this prodigious number of always hard-working slaves must have grown and multiplied ! Industry and abundance gave rise to them, and they for their part gave rise to abundance and industry.

*Paris this 16th day of the moon of Chahban 1718*

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[\[1\]](#) See letter 108.