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*Rica to \*\*\**

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The University of Paris is the eldest daughter of the kings of France, and very elderly, for she is over nine hundred years old [\[1\]](#) ; indeed her mind sometimes wanders.

I was told that some time ago she had a great quarrel with some doctors over the letter q, which she wanted to have people pronounce like a k. [\[2\]](#) The dispute heated up so that some of them were divested of their property. The parlement had to put an end to the fuss, and it granted permission by solemn decree for all subjects of the king of France to pronounce that letter however they wished. It was something to see the two most respectable institutions of Europe busy deciding the fate of a letter of the alphabet.

I seems, my dear \*\*\*, that the heads of the greatest men shrink when they are assembled, and the where more sages are found, there also is less wisdom. The great institutions cling so tightly to minutiae, formalities, and vain customs, that what is essential always comes later. I have heard it said that the when a king of Aragon had assembled the states of Aragon and Catalonia, the first sessions were devoted to deciding in what language the deliberations would be formulated. There was a lively dispute, and the states would a thousand times have broken up if someone had not thought of an expedient, which was that the question would be asked in the Catalan language, and the reply in Aragonese.

*Paris this 25th day of the moon of Zilhagé 1718*

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[\[1\]](#) According to Moreri, who notes in passing, "some authors pretend that it was established by Charlemagne about 800" (1707, art. "Université").

[\[2\]](#) Pierre Ramus (1515-1572), philosopher and grammarian, raised this quarrel in 1559 in his *Scholae grammaticae*. Bayle talks about it in *DHC* (art. "Ramus", remark G).