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Usbek to Rhedi in Venice

The monarch who reigned for so long is no more. [1] He made people talk a lot when he was alive ; everyone has fallen silent at his death. Steady and courageous in that final moment, he seemed to yield only to fate. So died the great Shah Abas, after filling the entire earth with his name. [2]

Do not think that this great event has provoked only moral reflections here. Everyone thinks of his own business, and of taking his advantages of this change. The king, great-grandson of the deceased monarch, being only five, [3] his uncle, a prince, has been declared regent of the kingdom. [4]

The late king had made a will which limited the regent's authority. The shrewd prince went before the Parlement, and setting forth all the rights of his birth, he has had the deposition of the monarch, [5] who, wishing to survive himself, seemed to have pretended still to reign after his death, annulled.

The parlements are like those ruins that one treads underfoot, but which always recall some temple famous for the peoples' ancient religion. About the only thing they now concern themselves with is the dispensing of justice ; and their authority is always languishing unless some unforeseen coincidence comes along to restore their strength and life. These great bodies have followed the destiny of human things : they have yielded to time, which destroys everything ; to the corruption of morals, which has weakened everything ; to the supreme authority, which has brought everything down. [6]

But the regent, who has tried to become acceptable by the people, at first seemed to respect this image of public freedom ; and as if he had intended to raise the temple and the idol back up from the ground, he has wanted them to be regarded as the support of the monarchy and foundation of all legitimate authority.

Paris this 4th day of the moon of Regeb 1715

[1] The king died just three days before this letter, the date of which corresponds to 4 September 1715.

[2] "Great" because he had taken back several cities and provinces from the Turks and Portuguese. He too was "steadfast and courageous in his final moment" (Morel 1707, art. "Schach Abas".)

[3] Louis XV was born in 1710.

[4] Philippe d'Orléans, nephew of Louis XIV.

[5] Louis XIV's testament had instituted a regency council of fourteen, entrusting the young king's education to the Duc du Maine, to whom the officers of the king's household were to swear obedience. But Parlement at the regent's insistence annulled the testament.

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[6] Through the right to petition which the regent re-established on 15 September 1715, the courts recovered a role which the monarch had suppressed.