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*Rica to Usbek in ****

The other day I happened to be in a company where I saw a man who was very content with himself. In fifteen minutes he decided three questions of morality, four historical problems, and five points of physics. I have never seen such a universal decider ; his mind was never suspended by the slightest doubt. They left the sciences, and took up news of the day ; he decided about the news of the day. I wanted to trip him up, and said to myself : I must make use of my strength ; I am going to take refuge in my country. I spoke to him of Persia ; but I had scarcely said four words before he twice refuted me, based on the authority of MM. Tavernier and Chardin. [1] Oh good Lord, said I to myself, who is this man ? Next thing he will know the streets of Isfahan better than I do ! My decision was soon made : I said no more, and let him talk, and he is still deciding.

Paris this 8th day of the moon of Zilcadé 1715

[1] A wink from the author, who bases much of his information about Persia on those two writers, sources that would have been obvious to many of his readers.