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- Persian Letters - Letters -

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## Letter 14

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<a href="#">Letter 13</a>	<a href="#">Letter 15</a>
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*Usbek to the same*

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As the population was growing by the day, the Troglodytes thought the time had come to choose a king for themselves. They agreed that the crown should be awarded to him who was the most just, and all eyes were cast on an elder venerable by his age and his dependable virtue. He had not wished to be present at this assembly ; he had withdrawn into his house, his heart heavy with sorrow. [1]

When they sent deputies to him to inform him of the choice they had made of him : God forbid, he said, that I should do the Troglodytes this wrong, that any should believe there is no one among them more just than I. You award me with the crown ; and if you absolutely insist, I will have to accept it : but be sure I will die of grief for having at my birth seen the Troglodytes free, and to see them today subjects. At these words he began to shed a torrent of tears : Oh dreadful day, he repeated, and why have I lived to see this ? Then he cried out in a stern voice : I see what it is, oh Troglodytes : your virtue is becoming a burden to you ; in your present condition, having no chief, you have to be virtuous despite yourselves ; otherwise could not survive, and would succumb to the misfortune of your forebears. But you find this yoke too heavy ; you would rather be subjected to a prince, and obey his laws, less rigid than your ways ; You know that at that point you will be able to content your ambition, to acquire wealth, and to languish limply in the lap of pleasure ; and that provided you avoid lapsing into major crimes, you will no longer need virtue. He paused a moment, and his tears flowed more than ever. And what do you expect me to do ? How can I order a Troglodyte to do anything ? Do you want him to do a virtuous deed because so I order him, when he would do the same without me by the sole inclination of nature ? Oh Troglodytes, I am at the end of my days, my blood is cold in my veins ; I am soon going to meet your sacred ancestors ; why do you want me to sadden them, and be obliged to tell them that I have left you under different yoke from that of virtue ?

*Erzerum this 10th day of the moon of Gemmadi II, 1711*

<a href="#">Supplementary Letter I of 1758 edition</a>
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[1] The establishment of the Troglodytes' monarchy and its interpretation recall the institution of the Hebrew monarchy in I Samuel (I Kings) 8:6-9 and 10:19.