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## Letter 13

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*Usbek to the same*

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I cannot say enough about the virtue of the Troglodytes. One of them would say one day : My father is to plow his field tomorrow ; I will rise two hours before him, and when he goes to his field, he will find it already plowed.

Another would say to himself : My sister seems to have taken a liking to a young Troglodyte who is related to us : I must raise this matter with my father, and get him to arrange for this marriage.

One came to tell another that robbers had absconded with his herd. This is very disappointing, he said, for there was an all-white heifer which I meant to offer to the gods.

Another could be heard to say : I must go to the temple to thank the gods : for my brother, whom my father loves so, and who is so dear to me, has recovered his health.

Or else : There is a field adjoining my father's, and those who farm it are exposed every day to the heat of the sun : I must go plant two trees in it, so those poor folk can sometimes go rest in their shade.

One day when several Troglodytes were assembled, an old man spoke of a young man he suspected of committing some foul deed, and reproached him for it. We do not think he committed this crime, said the young Troglodytes ; but if he did it, may he die the last of his family. [1]

One Troglodyte was told by someone that strangers had pillaged his house, and taken everything : If they were not unjust, he replied, I would wish the gods let them use it longer than I have.

Such multiple prosperities were not observed without envy. The neighboring peoples got together, and on some vain pretext resolved to make off with take their flocks. As soon as this intention was known, the Troglodytes sent ambassadors to meet with them, who spoke to them as follows :

What have the Troglodytes done to you ? Have they abducted your wives, stolen your livestock, laid waste your countrysides ? No, we are just, and we fear the gods. So what do you want from us ? Do you want wool to make yourselves clothing ? Do you want milk for your flocks, or the fruits of our fields ? Put down your arms, come among us, and we will give you some of all those things. But we swear by what is most sacred that if you enter our territory as enemies, we will regard you as an unjust people, and will treat you as wild beasts.

These words were rejected with contempt ; these savage peoples entered armed into the territory of the Troglodytes, whom they thought were defended by nothing but their innocence.

But they were well prepared for defense. They had placed their women and children in the midst of them. They were surprised by their enemies' injustice, but not by their number. A new ardor had taken command of their hearts : one wanted to die for his father, another for his wife and children, this one for his brothers, that one for his friends, and all for the Troglodyte people. The place of someone who expired was swiftly taken by another who, besides the common cause, further had another individual's death to avenge.

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Such was the combat of injustice and virtue. Those cowardly people who sought nothing but plunder were not even ashamed to flee ; and they yielded to the virtue of the Troglodytes, though it had no effect on them.

*Erzerum this 9th day of the moon of Gemmadi II, 1711*

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[1] In other words, may he have no progeny to bury him : a Roman imprecation (see *My Thoughts*, no. 325).