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XVI.8 On the separation of women from men

- The Spirit of Law - Book XVI. How the laws of domestic slavery relate to the nature of the climate -

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XVI.8 On the separation of women from men

It is a consequence of polygamy that in sensual and wealthy nations a man should have a great many wives. Their separation from men and their enclosure follow naturally from this large number. Domestic order so requires ; an insolvent debtor seeks to shelter himself from the pursuits of his creditors. There are such climates where the physical has such force that the moral can do almost nothing. Leave a man with a woman : temptations will be transgressions, the attack certain, the resistance nil ; in those countries, instead of precepts, it is bolts that are needed.

A classical Chinese book regards being alone in an isolated apartment with a woman without doing her violence as a prodigy of virtue. [1]

[1] "To come upon a forgotten treasure which one can take, or a beautiful woman alone in an isolated apartment ; to hear the voice of one's enemy who is about to perish if one does not save him : an admirable touchstone." (Translation of a Chinese work on morality which one can see in Father du Halde, vol. III, p. 151.)