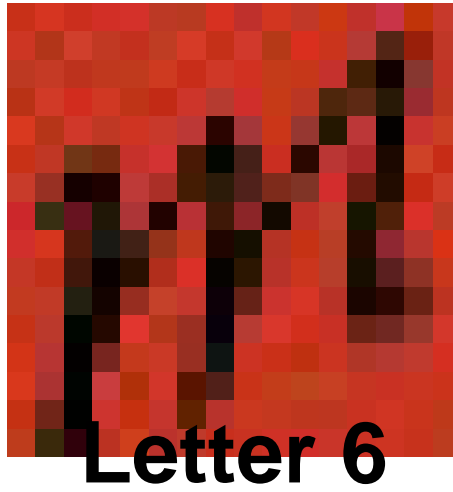


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Letter 6

Letter 5	Letter 7
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Usbek to his friend Nessir in Isfahan

At one day's journey from Erivan, [1] we left Persia to enter lands of Turkish obedience ; twelve days later we reached Erzerum, where we will stay for three or four months.

I must admit, Nessir, that I felt an inner pang when I lost sight of Persia, and found myself amidst perfidious Osmanlins. [2] By entering into these profane countries, I felt as if I were becoming profane myself.

I thought about my country, my family, my friends ; my affection was revived ; I became uneasy and then quite anxious, and saw that for my peace of mind I had undertaken too much.

But what troubles my heart the most is my wives : I cannot think about them without being consumed with worry.

It is not, Nessir, that I love them ; my insensitivity in this regard leaves me without desires. In the numerous seraglio where I have lived, I have anticipated love, and destroyed it by love itself ; but from my very coldness there issues a sort of hidden jealousy that devours me : I see a band of women left almost to themselves ; I have nothing but cowering souls to vouch for them ; I could scarcely feel secure if my slaves were loyal : what then if they are not ? What sad news of them might come to me in the distant lands I am about to survey ? This is an evil to which my friends can apply no remedy ; it is a place the sorry secrets of which they must not know. And what could they do about it ? Would I not a thousand times prefer unseen impunity to notorious chastisement ? I confide all my troubles to your heart, my dear Nassir ; that is the only consolation I have left in my present state.

Erzerum this 10th day of the moon of Rebiab II, 1711

[1] Capital of Armenia, on the border between Turkey and Persia.

[2] Another name for the Ottomans.