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VII.3 On sumptuary laws in the aristocracy

- The Spirit of Law - Book VII. Consequences of the different principles of the three governments with respect to sumptuary laws, to luxury, and to the condition of women -

Date de mise en ligne : vendredi 24 août 2018

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VII.3 On sumptuary laws in the aristocracy

Ill-constituted aristocracy has the misfortune that the nobles have the wealth and yet must not spend ; luxury, opposed to the spirit of moderation, must be banned from it. Therefore there are only very poor people, who cannot receive, and very wealthy ones, who cannot spend.

In Venice, the laws hold the nobles to modesty. They have become so used to saving that courtesans are the only ones who can make them give up money. This is the means used to maintain industry ; the most reprehensible of woman there spend without danger, while their tributaries lead the world's most obscure lives.

The good Greek republics had admirable institutions in this respect. The rich used their money on feasts, choruses, chariots, race horses, and onerous magistracies. Wealth was as much a burden there as poverty.