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XIII.18 On the remittance of tributes

- The Spirit of Law - Book XIII. On the relations which the levying of tributes and the magnitude of public revenues have with liberty -

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XIII.18 On the remittance of tributes

The maxim of the great empires of the Orient, of returning tributes to the provinces that have suffered, ought to be adopted in monarchical states. There are some where it is established, but it is more crushing than if it were not, because with the prince demanding neither more nor less, the whole state shares the responsibility. To relieve a village that underpays, the burden is put on another that pays better ; the first village is not restored, and the second is destroyed. The people are desperate between the necessity of paying for fear of extortions, and the danger of paying for fear of surcharges.

A well-governed state must put as its first item of expense a specific sum for fortuitous cases. The public, like individuals, impoverish themselves if they spend exactly the income from their lands.

With respect to co-liability among inhabitants of the same village, it has been said that it was reasonable, because a fraudulent plot could be supposed on their part [\[1\]](#) ; but where did we get the idea that, based on suppositions, something unjust in itself and ruinous for the state had to be instituted ?

[\[1\]](#) See the *Treatise on the Finances of the Romans*, ch. ii, printed in Paris by Briasson, 1740. [*Traité des finances et de la fausse monnaie des Romains*, by Guillaume Beauvais.]