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XVIII.16 On civil laws among peoples who do not know the use of money

- The Spirit of Law - Book XVIII. On laws in their relationship to the nature of the terrain -

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When a people does not have the use of money, nearly all the injustices it knows are the result of violence, and weak people by joining together defend themselves against violence. These are merely political arrangements. But among a people where money is instituted, one is subject to injustices that result from deceit, and those injustices may be committed in a thousand ways. It is therefore necessary to have good civil laws, which arise with the new means and varied manners of being malicious.

In countries where there is no money, the thief steals only things, and things are never identical. In countries where there is money, the thief steals signs, and signs are always identical. In the former countries nothing can be hidden, because the thief is always carrying with him the evidence to convict him ; it is just the opposite in the other countries.