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XXIII.23 On the state of the world after the destruction of the Romans

- The Spirit of Law - Book XXIII. On laws in their relation to the number of inhabitants -

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The rules which the Romans made to increase the number of their citizens had their effect while their republic, in the vigor of its institution, had only to repair the losses that resulted from its courage, its temerity, its firmness, its love of glory and even its virtue. But soon the wisest laws could not restore what a dying republic, general anarchy, a military government, oppressive rule, arrogant despotism, a weak monarchy, and a dim, foolish, and superstitious court, had in succession torn down ; one would have said that they had conquered the world only to weaken it and deliver it defenseless to the barbarians. The Gothic, Getic, Sarassin, and Tartar nations overpowered them in turn ; soon the barbarian peoples had only barbarian peoples to destroy. And so it was that in the time of fables, after the floods and deluges, armed men rose from the ground and exterminated each other.