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V.10 On the promptness of execution in monarchy

- The Spirit of Law - Book V. That the laws made by the legislator must be relative to the principle of the government -

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V.10 On the promptness of execution in monarchy

Monarchical government has a big advantage over republican government : business being conducted by one man alone, there is more diligence in the execution. But as this diligence could degenerate into rapidity, the laws will introduce a certain slowness. They must not only favor the nature of each constitution, but also to correct the abuses that might result from that very nature.

Cardinal de Richelieu would have one avoid, in monarchies, the annoyances of judicial bodies, [1] which create difficulties about everything. [2] Even if that man had not had despotism in his heart, he would have had it in his head.

The bodies which serve as repository of the laws never obey better than when they proceed deliberately, and bring to the prince's business the kind of reflection one can hardly expect from the court's lack of understanding of the laws of the state, or from the precipitation of its councils. [3]

What would have become of the fairest monarchy on earth if magistrates, through their plodding, their objections, their entreaties, had not checked the course even of their kings' virtues, when these monarchs, consulting nothing but their great souls, would have rewarded beyond measure services dispensed with a courage and fidelity which also was beyond measure ?

[1] [*Compagnies* : "applies to certain dignified bodies established by authority of the king to dispense justice. Parlements the court of accounts, etc., are sovereign or superior *compagnies*. Other venues where there are several officers are subaltern *compagnies*." (Furetière.)]

[2] *Political Testament*.

[3] *Barbaris cunctatio servilis, statim exequiregium videtur* ["With barbarians, indecision is proper to slaves, prompt action king-like"] (Tacitus, *Annals*, book V [in fact, book VI, ch. 32]).