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XIII.10 That the amount of tributes depends on the nature of the government

- 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.10 That the amount of tributes depends on the nature of the government

Tributes should be very light under a despotic government. Otherwise, who would take the trouble to cultivate the land ? And furthermore, how could anyone pay large tributes under a government that adds nothing to what the subject has given ?

In the surprising power of the prince and the strange weakness of the people, there should be no room for ambiguities about anything. The tributes should be so easy to collect, and so clearly established, that they can be neither raised nor lowered by those who collect them : a portion of the fruits of the earth, a capitation, or a tribute of a certain percentage on merchandise are the only proper ones.

It is good in the despotic government for merchants to have a personal exemption, and for practice to make them respected ; otherwise they would be too weak in the negotiations they might have with the prince's officers.