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# XIX.10 On the character of the Spaniards and of the Chinese

- The Spirit of Law - Book XIX. On the laws in the relation they have to the principles that constitute the general spirit, the ethos, and the manners of a nation -

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The various characters of nations are incorporate virtues and vices, good and bad qualities. The happy mixtures are those which yield great advantages, and often you would not suspect them ; there are some that do great harm, and these too you would not suspect.

The good faith of the Spanish has forever been renowned. Justin tells us of their dependability in keeping things entrusted to them : they have often suffered death to keep them secret. [1] That dependability which they used to have, they still have today. All the nations that do business in Cadiz entrust their fortune to the Spanish ; they have never had cause for regret. But this admirable quality combined with their indolence forms a mixture that results in effects that are pernicious to them ; the peoples of Europe conduct before their very eyes all of their monarchy's business.

The character of the Chinese makes for an entirely different mixture which contrasts with the character of the Spanish. Their precarious life [2] gives them prodigious activity, and such excessive desire for gain that no trading nation can trust them. [3] This recognized unreliability has kept the Japan trade for them ; no European merchant has dared attempt it in their name, however simple it might have been to attempt it through their northern maritime provinces.

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[1] Book XLIII.

[2] By the nature of the climate and the terrain.

[3] Father du Halde, vol. II.