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XX.17 That the prince must not engage in commerce

- The Spirit of Law - Book XX. On laws in their relationship with commerce, considered in its nature and its distinctions -

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XX.17 That the prince must not engage in commerce

Theophilus, [1] seeing a vessel bearing merchandise for his wife Theodora, had it burned. "I am an emperor," he said to her, "and you are making me into a shipmaster ; how can the poor go about earning their living if we too ply their trade ?" He could have added : Who can curb us if we create monopolies ? Who will force us to fulfill our engagements ?

This trade we are practicing is one the courtiers will want to practice ; they will be more avid and more unjust than we are. The people have confidence in our justice ; they have none in our opulence : ours is certainly proven by all the taxes that reduce them to poverty.

[1] [Johannes] Zonaras.