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XXI.19 A problem

- The Spirit of Law - Book XXI. On laws in the relation they have to commerce, considered in the transformations it has seen in the world -

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It is not for me to decide the question of whether, Spain being unable to ply the Indian trade by herself, it would not be better for her to open it to foreigners. I will simply say that she might oppose to that trade the fewest obstacles that her politics can allow. When the merchandise which the various nations ship to the Indies are costly there, the Indies give much of their merchandise, which is gold and silver, for a small number of foreign products ; the opposite occurs when the latter are cheap. Perhaps it would be useful if these nations undercut each other, so that the merchandise they bear to the Indies would always be inexpensive there. These are principles that need to be examined, yet without separating them from the other considerations, the security of the Indies, the usefulness of a single customs, the dangers of a great changeover, and the drawbacks that we foresee, and which are often less dangerous than the ones one cannot foresee.