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XV.5 On the slavery of Negroes

- The Spirit of Law - Book XV. How the laws of civil slavery relate to the nature of the climate -

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XV.5 On the slavery of Negroes

If I had to defend the right we have had to make slaves of Negroes, here is what I would say :

The peoples of Europe having exterminated those of America, they had to make slaves of the peoples of Africa in order to use them to clear all that land.

Sugar would be too dear if we did not have the plant that produces it tended by slaves.

The people in question are black from head to toe, and they have such flat noses that it is almost impossible to pity them.

We cannot put it into our minds that God, who is a wise being, has put a soul, especially a good soul, in an all-black body.

It is so natural to think that it is color that constitutes the essence of humanity, that the peoples of Asia who make eunuchs always deprive blacks of their relationship to us in a more decisive way.

The color of the skin may be judged by that of the hair, which among the Egyptians, the best philosophers in the world, was of such great consequence that they put to death all the redhaired men who fell into their hands.

One proof that Negroes have no common sense is that they make more of a glass necklace than a gold one, which among civilized nations is of such great consequence.

It is impossible for us to assume that these people are men, because if we assumed they were men, people would begin to think we are not ourselves Christians.

Petty minds make too much of the injustice we do to Africans. For if it were as great as they say, would it not have occurred to the princes of Europe, who make so many useless conventions among themselves, to make a general one in favor of compassion and pity ?