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XXIII.1 Of men and animals, with respect to the multiplication of their species

- The Spirit of Law - Book XXIII. On laws in their relation to the number of inhabitants -

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O Vénus ! ô mere de l'Amour !

.....
Dès le premier beau jour que ton astre ramène,

Les zéphirs font sentir leur amoureuse haleine ;

La terre orne son sein de brillantes couleurs,

Et l'air est parfumé du doux esprit des fleurs.

On entend les oiseaux, frappés de ta puissance,

Par mille tons lascifs célébrer ta présence ;

Pour la belle génisse, on voit les fiers taureaux,

Ou bondir dans la plaine, ou traverser les eaux ;

Enfin, les habitants des bois et des montagnes,

Des fleuves et des mers, des vertes campagnes,

Brûlant à ton aspect d'amour et de désir,

S'engagent à peupler par l'attrait du plaisir :

Tant on aime à te suivre, et ce charmant empire

Que donne la beauté sur tout ce qui respire. [1]

O Venus ! O mother of Love ! [...]

From the first fine day which thy star brings back,

The zephyrs blow their loving breath,

The earth adorns its bosom in brilliant colors,

And the air is scented with the sweet spirit of flowers.

XXIII.1 Of men and animals, with respect to the multiplication of their species

We hear the birds, struck with thy might,

For the fair heifer, we see the proud bulls

Bound in the plain, or cross the waters.

In short, the inhabitants of the woods and mountains,

Of rivers and seas and green landscapes,

Burning at thy sight with love and desire,

Engaging to populate through the attraction of pleasure ;

So do we love to follow thee, and the charming dominion

That beauty gives to everything that breathes.

The females of animals have fairly constant fertility. But in the human species, the manner of thinking, the character, the passions, the fancies, the caprice, the idea of preserving one's beauty, the ungainliness of pregnancy, and the nuisance of an overlarge family, disrupt propagation in a thousand ways.

[1] Translation of the beginning of Lucretius by Mr. Hénault. [This invocation to Venus is all that is extant of Hénault's translation of three books of *De rerum natura*.]