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XII.27 On the behavior of the monarch

- The Spirit of Law - Book XII. On laws that constitute political liberty in its relation to the citizen -

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XII.27 On the behavior of the monarch

The prince's behavior contributes as much to liberty as the laws do ; like them, he can make men into beasts and beasts into men. If he likes free souls, he will have subjects ; if he likes base souls, he will have slaves. If he wishes to know the great art of ruling, let him keep honor and virtue by his side, let him call upon personal merit. He can even occasionally cast an eye on talents. Let him not fear those rivals we call men of merit : he is their equal, once he likes them ; let him win the heart, but not capture the mind ; let him belong to the people ; he should be flattered by the love of the least of his subjects, for they are still men ; the populace demand so little deference that it is just to grant it to them ; the infinite distance between the sovereign and them assures that they will not be an impediment to him. Susceptible to entreaty, let him be firm against demands, and know that his people benefit from his refusals, and his courtiers from his favors.