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XV.9 Different kinds of slavery

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

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XV.9 Different kinds of slavery

There are two kinds of servitude, real and personal. The real kind is that which attaches the slave to the land. Such were the slaves of the Germans, as Tacitus reports. [1] They had no domestic function ; they returned to their master a certain quantity of wheat, livestock, or raw materials : the object of their slavery went no further. This sort of servitude is still established in Hungary, in Bohemia, and in several places in Lower Germany.

Personal servitude has to do with domestic services, and is closer tied to the person of the master.

Extreme abuse of slavery is when it is at the same time personal and real. Such was the servitude of the Helots among the Lacedæmonians : they were subjected to all the labors outside the house, and to all sorts of mistreatment inside : this helotism is against the nature of things. Simple peoples have real slavery only, [2] because their wives and children do the domestic tasks. Sensuous peoples have personal slavery, because luxury requires the service of slaves in the house. But helotism combines in the same persons the slavery established among sensuous peoples and the kind established among simple peoples.

[1] *De moribus germanorum.*

[2] You could not (says Tacitus, on the ways of the Germans) distinguish the master from the slave by the delights of life.