

TO RESPECT GOD'S NAME.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER III.

SECOND COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

You shall not take the name of God in vain.

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I. - ON THE OATH, AND PERJURY.

260. *The Enemies of St. Narcissus.* -

An oath is only to be taken for things just and true, when required by our lawful superiors, and on grave occasions. But one of the greatest crimes that could be committed is that of perjuring one's self. Three men had plotted the ruin of St. Narcissus, bishop of Jerusalem, and accused him publicly of a heinous crime. In order to give yet greater weight to their accusation, the first of them prayed that he might be burned alive, if he did not tell the truth; the second cried: "And that I may be seized with the most frightful malady, if I have spoken falsely;" finally, the third said: "That I may lose my sight, if my testimony is not true!" As for St. Narcissus, seeing that his influence was daily decreasing, under these degrading accusations, he quitted Jerusalem and retired into solitude. But let us see what happened.

The three impostors did not escape the punishment

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they had voluntarily called down on themselves The first was burned to death in a fire which broke out in his own house; the second saw himself covered with ulcers from head to foot, and his whole body became one mass of putrefaction. The third was so shocked by the terrible chastisement of his two companions that he repented, confessed his crime and completely exculpated the holy bishop. Nevertheless, the abundant tears he shed as the natural consequence of his repentance, made him afterwards lose his sight.

- GODESCARD, *Vies des Saints*, (*Lives of Saints*) 7th August.

261. *St. Eloi's Oath.* -

We must abstain from swearing, that is to say, from taking an oath, unless when it is actually necessary. Some very pious persons make it a scruple of conscience to take an oath even when it would seem to be necessary. We cannot blame them, my dear friends, especially when we see so many others who take oaths with so little judgement or reflection. King Clotaire II., who reigned in France from 584 to 628, having heard of St. Eloi as a very upright man and a skilful goldsmith, had him brought to his court, which was then at Reuil, near Paris. After having admired the wisdom of his words, and the purity of his sentiments, he said to him: "I will keep you near my person, so that I may make your fortune; here are some relics of Saints, swear on them that you will be ever faithful to me. Hearing this proposal, so simple and so natural, St. Eloi was troubled; he promised Clotaire to be faithful to him, but he would not dare to take the oath on

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the holy relics, because it seemed to him that there was no necessity for so doing. The more the king insisted the more he excused himself, for fear of displeasing God. At last, the king was touched by the delicacy of his conscience; he approved of his refusal and told him: "I understand your refusal, and I honestly believe that your unwillingness to swear lightly is a much surer guarantee for your fidelity than all the oaths in the world."
- D. GENEVAUX, *Histoires choisies*.

262. *A Perjurer's Morsel of Bread.* -

Speaking of those tremendous oaths which are sometimes taken to affirm a falsehood or deny a truth, we find in the history of England an awful fact, which occurred in London, in the year 1051. One day when King Edward the Confessor was giving a grand banquet to the lords of his court, amongst the guests was seen Earl Godwin whom the public voice accused of the murder of Alfred, King Edward's brother. A young page, who was waiting at table, made a false step when presenting wine to the king; yet still he managed to avoid spilling any of the liquor. Then, in order to indicate that one of his feet had secured the other, the young man quoting some words from Holy Scripture said laughing: "It is true enough that *the brother who is supported by his brother, stands firm.*" These words recalled sad memories to King Edward's mind. "Ah!" said he, applying them to himself, "ah! if I had my brother Alfred still, how well we could assist each other!" Saying these words, Edward

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cast a scrutinizing look on Earl Godwin. The latter thinking to satisfy a prince so religious by a solemn oath, exclaimed: "May this morsel of bread be the last I shall eat, if I had any act or part in the murder of Prince Alfred!" The wretch! his imprecation was instantly heard: the bread stopped in his throat, and choked him, leaving the guests to consider whether the accident was a divine chastisement, or the natural effect of the culprit's agitation.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, IV., 339.

263. *The Refractory Priests.* -

You have all heard of the French Revolution, my young friends; but, perhaps, you may not be acquainted with the innumerable examples of virtue, of devotedness, of fidelity given at that unhappy period by thousands of priests, of religious, of citizens of all classes. *Refractory priests* was the name then given to those who had the courage to refuse taking oaths which their conscience did not justify them in taking. These generous confessors of the faith were nearly all banished, imprisoned, or even cruelly put to death. Four of them were going quietly to Le Havre to embark for England; a sentinel stopped them, demanding their passports. It was there stated that they were priests, and the oath was immediately proposed to them. "It is for refusing," said they, "to take that impious and execrable oath that we are now being banished from our country." The misguided populace then cried out: "They are refractory priests." And, falling on them, they killed the two first, who were priests of the

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diocese of Seez. The two others, belonging one to the same diocese, the other to that of Mans, are dragged to the river side. There, they are again summoned to take the oath, but they still reply: "Our conscience forbids it." They are thrown into the river; they rise to the surface of the water, and the people call out to them: "Swear, unhappy men, and you shall be taken out!" - "No," cried the two martyrs, drowning in the river, "no, we cannot, we will not swear!" And when scarcely able to speak, they repeated: "We will not swear." At the sight of this invincible constancy, the spectators became furious with anger; arming themselves with pitch-forks, they applied them to the necks of the generous confessors, plunged them again into the water, and kept them there till they were dead. I know not, my dear friends, if the acts of any of the martyrs furnish examples of more insatiate fury on one side, or more heroic constancy on the other.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, IV., 359.

264. *The Dealer Struck Dead.* -

When people have lost all scruples of conscience in matters of business, they sometimes have recourse, my dear children, to oaths and even imprecations, for the smallest trifle of money. I shall never forget the story of an unfortunate man of the department of la Sarthe or thereabouts, in France, which furnished a salutary lesson to all who knew or heard of it. This man had bought a wretched cow at a fair, for next to nothing, (it only cost him fifty francs,) and wanted to sell it again for an hundred francs. In order

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to make a show of being honest and disinterested he said to every one who presented themselves to buy the cow: "I tell you frankly now - for I don't want to deceive you, - this cow cost me ninety francs, and I only ask a hundred - that is little enough profit, you'll admit, for, you know, every one must live." - "But did she really cost ninety francs?" someone finally asked him. "On my word she did, that I may die this moment if I don't tell you the truth!" He had scarcely uttered this horrible imprecation against himself, when he fell dead in the midst of the market-place and before a crowd of people. No one doubted but it was a judgement from Heaven; but it was made still more manifest when some hours after, the original owner of the cow happening to pass that way, told the truth, that the unhappy dealer had only given him fifty francs, for the cow. Let us beware, my dear friends, of making use of such forms of expression as, *upon my word of honour*, and such like, so common in the mouths of persons who have little or no honour to pledge.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, IV., 340.

265. *About Two Walnut Trees.* -

Most stories relating to swearers are fatal, my dear children; but here is one that seems still more tragical than the others. It happened some years ago in Belgium. Claude Guillemot, the father of five children, had a cottage near Tournay, and four acres of ground which he cultivated to advantage. He was a very irritable man, quarrelling with every one about him, and for the least things; when he once gave way to his passion,

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he broke and smashed all that came under his hand. He had a near neighbour, not quite so passionate as himself, but still not very agreeable. It happened that these two individuals had a dispute concerning two large walnut trees which separated their respective farms, and which each claimed as belonging to him. Claude Guillemot at first restrained himself so far as to consent to leave the matter to arbitration, but when it was decided that the walnut trees should belong to his neighbour, he became furious, swore to be revenged, and to burn his adversary's house. "This I swear to do," cried he, "and if I don't that God may open hell under my feet, and cast me into it!" He thus bound himself to commit a crime, and vowed himself to hell if he did not. His fit of anger once passed, however, he made this reflection: "If I am discovered, I shall be sent to end my days in the prison galleys; but, no matter for that, I have sworn to do it, and I'll keep my oath." A month after, when he thought no one would suspect him, he arose in the middle of the night, and lighting a bunch of matches, wrapped them in some light inflammable substance, then went on tiptoe and threw the whole on his neighbour's roof. The roof was made of straw, and soon took fire. Unhappily for the incendiary, as he hurried away he tripped over a stone, lost his balance, and fell with his head against the trunk of a tree, whereby he was knocked senseless to the ground. The fire made rapid progress.

A black smoke ascended in dense masses from the

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burning house; the flames spread a lurid light around, and burning coals and sparks were carried to a great distance. The roof at last fell in, and all the inmates of the house perished, the victims of Claude Guillemot's crime. As for him, he soon recovered from his stupor; but who can describe his feelings, when he saw his own dwelling in flames, and found himself surrounded by a multitude of people, all of whom accused him of being the cause of the disaster! His wife and children houseless, himself arrested, given up to justice, and finally sentenced to the galleys for life; these were the consequences of his having kept his wicked oath! He had sinned by taking it, and he sinned still more by putting it into execution.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, IV., 358.

II. - ON CURSING AND BLASPHEMING.

266. *The Blasphemies of Nicanor.* -

The Sacred Scriptures relate the example of many blasphemers who were struck dead by the justice of God. Here is one which took place in the time of Judas Maccabeus. Demetrius, King of Syria, had charged Nicanor, one of the best generals of his States, to go and destroy the Temple of Jerusalem, and put all the Jews to death. This Nicanor, already the declared enemy of the Jews, proposed to himself to glut his hatred of that holy nation, and throw down their temple. He even dared to raise his sacrilegious hand over the house of the Lord uttering the most horrible blasphemies

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against God. Then the priests went to the Temple, prostrated themselves on the ground, and wept, saying: "Lord, You have chosen this house that Your name may be invoked therein; You would have it become for the people a place of prayer and of grace! Revenge Yourself, then, on this impious man and his army; let him perish by the sword. Remember his blasphemies, and suffer him not to live any longer!" A prayer so full of faith and confidence could not fail to be heard. The valiant Judas Maccabeus arrived in front of the Syrians with his little army of three thousand men; he also prayed to the Lord in these terms: "Lord, You did of old send Your angel to smite the army of Sennacherib, when one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians perished in one night, strike to-day Your enemies and ours!"

After this brief exclamation, the two armies engaged, and, although Judas had only a handful of men in comparison with the Syrians, he was completely victorious. But what struck every one with the greatest terror was the sight of Nicanor, killed the very first. The soldiers, seeing the fate of their general, threw down their arms, and of thirty thousand men, not one remained. Judas caused the head and one arm of the blasphemer to be cut off and brought to Jerusalem; the arm was suspended before the temple, and the head was placed on the top of the citadel. The tongue which had uttered so many blasphemies was cut into small pieces, and given as food to birds. Sad, but just punishment of him who

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had committed such heinous crimes!

- *II. Maccabees*, Chapter XIV and XV.

267. *The Trial of Labarre, of Abbeville.* -

There happened in the 18th century, my young friends, a very tragical event which I am going to relate to you; may it inspire you with all the horror of bad books which they deserve: A young gentleman of Abbeville, in France, named John Francis Lefevre de Labarre, had had the misfortune to read some works of Voltaire, and had imbibed from them, as you may well imagine, the very worst sentiments. Not content with ruining himself, he succeeded in seducing some other gentlemen of his own age. These wretches, mutually encouraging each other in crime, came at last to throw aside all decency and decorum: they uttered publicly the most horrible blasphemies against God, His holy religion, and all that is sacred in the world. Public morality was outraged, and the parliament of Paris caused these wretches to be arrested, tried, and condemned. Labarre especially, being the author of this frightful scandal, was treated with all the severity of the laws of France of that time. By a warrant, dated the 4th of June, 1766, he was condemned to give satisfaction in the public street, to have his head cut off, and his body burned to ashes, together with the bad books from which he had drawn such pernicious doctrines. This sentence was executed to the letter. Whilst the blasphemer stood to give public satisfaction to the outraged multitude, there was affixed to his person a placard bearing the inscription in large characters

IMPIOUS AND SACRILEGIOUS BLASPHEMER.

Once more, my dear children, let us beware of reading those vile books that would thus lead us to our ruin.

- *FELLER, Biographie Universelle*, II., 82.

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268. *A Curser and his 487 Beans.* -

It is almost incredible, my young friends, how the habit of swearing, or making use of bad language, grows, when it is given way to. How many sins people then commit almost without perceiving them. Listen to a story I have heard on that subject. In England there was a law forbidding all kinds of swearing under a certain penalty. A man who was much addicted to that vice, being at table with some others, went on cursing and swearing as usual, without the least attempt to restrain himself. Every time he spoke he added an oath, or something equivalent thereto. On the following day he was summoned to the court without knowing for what. He had scarcely made his appearance in the hall, when he saw an individual take a little bag from his pocket and gravely count out some beans on a table. When he had finished, he said to the magistrate, "I hereby prove that this man whom you see before you, swore 487 times yesterday evening in such an inn." Being asked how he knew so exactly, he answered: "I chanced to have the left pocket of my coat full of beans yesterday, and when I perceived that this man cursed so often, I took it into my head to drop one into the other pocket every time he uttered an oath. In this

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way it was that I reckoned 487, and that number is under the truth, because my beans ran out, so that I was unable to continue my count." The accused could not, of course, deny the fact; he paid a large fine, reddened to the eyes with shame, and retired fully resolved to correct so shameful a habit.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 146.

269. *The Priest and the Swearing Carter.* -

Is it not true, my dear friends, that nothing is more common than to hear carters, coachmen and people of that kind cursing and swearing? They often say when the remark is made to them, that their horses are so used to it that they will not go so well without it. One day, the pastor of a small country parish was walking along the road reading his breviary. All at once he heard one of his parishioners urging on his horses with voice and whip, and swearing like a trooper. The priest goes up to him and says: "Well! my good Francis, it appears your load is hard to pull." - "You may say that, father, especially for such wretched beasts as these." - "Nevertheless, friend Francis, I cannot think that is any reason why you should curse and swear as you do." - "Oh! it's easy seen, father, that you know little of driving, or you'd know as well as I do that the horses won't go at all without that." - "My good friend, you are entirely mistaken, and I will prove it to your satisfaction; give me your whip." So saying, the good priest puts his breviary in his pocket, takes hold of the whip and gives the horses two or three good blows, crying

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as loud as he could: "Get along there, old horse!" The horses instantly started forward at so rapid a pace that Francis was obliged to run in order to keep up with them. The priest returned him his whip laughing: "Well! my good friend," said he, "you see horses can be made step out without cursing."

- G. S. G.

270. *A Pupil of the Brothers in Namur.* -

Young as you are, my dear little friends, you may sometimes prevent persons who are easily made angry from committing sin by uttering blasphemies or words injurious to the holy name of God. I will tell you a little story about one of your own companions which will, I know, interest you. He was a good little boy of ten or eleven years old, who went to school to the Brothers in Namur, a town in Belgium. One day, I believe it was in 1832 or 33, he gave a very touching proof of his faith. He got home from school a little later than usual, and his father being angry, began to scold him, swearing by the holy name of God. The poor child, shocked to think that he had involuntarily occasioned this blasphemy, threw himself on his knees before his father, and said to him: "My dear father, beat me if you choose, but do not, oh! do not profane the holy name of God!" The father was amazed, and seeing the horror which his child had of cursing, profited by the lesson, thanked him for reminding him of its wickedness, forgave him his fault, and from that time forward never dared to blaspheme. Ah! my young friends, how many sins

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might Christian children prevent their parents from committing!

- GUILLOIS, *Nouvelle Explic. du Cat.*, 186.

271. *The Blasphemer at the Tavern.* -

It would be very easy for the good God to strike those wretches suddenly dead who dare to insult Him by their blasphemy; if He does not do so, it is because He exercises mercy and patience. Yet it has sometimes happened that unhappy persons, having carried their audacity to the highest pitch, have been punished even in this life. In the month of February, 1847, an instance of this kind occurred in France, in the Department of Lower Seine. Some persons were sitting at table in a tavern kept by a man named Sylvain Levaillant. Amongst the workingmen present there was one who kept swearing continually, more from custom, as it seemed, than from any bad intention. The tavern-keeper remonstrated with him several times in a friendly way, and his advice was taken in good part by the tradesman, who was not without some feelings of religion. But another, a weaver, named Huberel, desirous of showing off, as it were, before the others, spoke in his turn, and commenced by denying that there was a God; from that he proceeded to belch forth all sorts of blasphemies against Him and His religion. Levaillant endeavours to soothe away this frenzy by words of mild persuasion, but the weaver answers in a scoffing tone: "Your God! I will sup with Him to-night!" Alas! dear children, he had scarcely uttered this blasphemy when he fell on

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his face as if struck by lightning. They hastened to raise him up; the unhappy wretch was dead! You cannot conceive, I am sure, the terror of the spectators; no one doubted but this awfully sudden death was a punishment from Heaven.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, IV., 336.

III. - ON VOWS.

272. *Jephtha's Rash Vow.* -

The first thing to be observed in making a vow is discretion. As we are not obliged to make a vow, dear friends, let us examine well, and weigh all things prudently, before making it. The most celebrated instance of a rash vow is that of Jephtha. That valiant Judge of Israel was at war with the Ammonites; he marched against them, and being unable to persuade their king to make peace, he prepared to offer them battle. His first care was to ask the assistance of Heaven; but in his imprudent zeal he made a vow, that if he gained the victory, he would sacrifice to the Lord the first who should come forth from his house to meet him on his return home. This was binding himself to do something, the exact nature of which he did not know.

The battle was fought, and Jephtha was the victor.

The same evening he returned in triumph to his dwelling.

Alas! he little thought what was going to happen.

His only daughter, a young girl of rare qualities, had no sooner heard of her father's victory, than she quickly assembles her companions and flies to meet him, singing, to the sound of cymbals and other

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instruments of music, canticles of joy and thanksgiving. As she walked at the head of the joyous band, she was the first whom Jephtha saw. At that sight the unfortunate father burst into tears, repenting, but too late, the imprudence of his rash vow. He then informed his beloved daughter of what he had promised the Lord; she submitted with a good grace and was herself the one to urge her father to accomplish his vow.

Accordingly, after having spent two months in the mountains preparing herself for that great sacrifice, this generous daughter returned to her father who executed what he had promised. The Holy Scripture does not say exactly what he did; some of the Fathers of the Church are of opinion that he really immolated his daughter as a holocaust; but others maintain, with more probability, that he merely consecrated her to the Lord near the Ark of the Covenant. Whatever he did, dear children, Jephtha's vow was rash and indiscreet, and ought not to be imitated.

- *Judges*, Chap. XI.

273. *An Idolater's Vow.* -

Speaking of vows, my dear children, I am going to tell you the story of a young pagan Arab, mentioned in the life of St. Euthymius. Asphebetes, emir of the Arabs, had been charged by a wicked king of Persia, named Yezdegerd, who was then cruelly persecuting the Christians of his States, to guard the frontier, so as to prevent them from escaping. Asphebetes was a pagan, but he had some feelings of humanity. He was accused to the king, not only of not preventing the

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Christians from leaving Persia, but even of favouring their flight. As soon as the Arab emir was made aware of the fate which awaited him, he took with him his wife and children and all his goods, and escaped to the territory of the Roman Empire. This was about the year 420. He had a son named Terebon, who had been long a paralytic, and suffered much. One night, when pain prevented him from closing his eyes, he reflected that none but God could cure him, and although he, like his father, was a pagan, he made this vow within himself: "Great God of heaven and earth, if You cure me, I will become a Christian." A few minutes after, he fell into a calm sleep, in which he saw a venerable old man with a white beard, who asked him what it was that troubled him, and the young man told his story. "Well! do as you have promised," said the old man, "and you shall be cured; I am Euthymius, and I dwell in the desert, near the torrent of the mountain, between Jerusalem and Jericho; come to me there!" Terebon, as soon as he awoke, related to his father all that passed; they set out that very day, with a great number of other Arabs. When they reached the grotto where St. Euthymius was at prayer with his monks, Terebon recognized him as the old man with the white beard, and related to him what he had seen. The holy abbot recited a fervent prayer, made the sign of the cross on the paralytic, and he was instantly cured. Struck by this prodigy, the Arabs fell on their knees, adored the God of the Christians,

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had themselves instructed, and were baptized some time after. I need not tell you, my young friends, that the one most eager to be baptized was he who had made the vow during his illness.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., p. 181.

274. *A Fowl Changed into Stone.* -

One of the most extraordinary Saints who illustrated the 5th century was St. Simeon (or Simon) Stylite, a famous solitary of Syria. Not content with giving himself up to the austerities of the other religious, he would do something which had never been done before. He had a pillar erected some fifteen feet in height, ascended to its top by a ladder, and there remained for several years exposed to the inclemency of the weather in all seasons. You will easily understand, my dear children, that such an extraordinary mode of life, joined to the sanctity of Simeon, attracted an incredible number of visitors, who, from the foot of his pillar, begged the assistance of his prayers. Amongst the pious pilgrims who visited him, mention is made of an Arab, whose name I do not know, but who was so affected by the sight of what a Saint was doing to please God, that he wished himself to do something particular. He made a vow, in presence of Simeon and all who were there, never to eat anything that should have had life; thus, no meat, no fish, no eggs not even milk food. It was a difficult vow to keep, my dear children, as you may well suppose, but this fervent Arab was for a long time faithful to it. I know not by what fatality he forgot himself so far as

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to kill a fowl himself, have it cooked and eat of it.

It was an open violation of his vow, and so to say, a mockery of God, to whom he had made it of his own free will, and without instigation from any one.

What was the consequence? God, knowing that he was at bottom a good Christian, contented Himself with giving him a warning capable of making him reflect. Scarcely had he eaten the first mouthful of the fowl, when all that remained in the dish became hard as stone, so that no one could break even the smallest piece from it. At first no one would believe such an extraordinary occurrence; people ran in crowds to convince themselves of it by their own eyes. The learned Theodoret, bishop of Cyr, in Syria, where it took place, states that he himself saw and touched this miraculous fowl. The poor Arab, to whom the circumstance occurred,

was struck by the prodigy; he thanked God for having recalled him to a sense of his duty, and ever after scrupulously observed the vow he had made.

- THEODORET, *Hist. Eccles.*, (*Ecclesiastical History*) Chap. XXVI.

275. *St. Louis and his Little Cross.* -

When we make a vow, my dear children, we ought to consider well what we are doing; but when once it is pronounced, we are not to be seeking idle pretexts for being dispensed from fulfilling it. St. Louis, that pious king of France, having fallen sick in 1244, at Paris, others say at Pontoise, it matters little which, was soon at the last extremity. Then it was that he made a vow if he recovered his health, to undertake a crusade to

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the Holy Land. When he was quite recovered, two months after, his first care was to accomplish his vow with all the strictness and fidelity that might be expected from such a Christian prince; and for that purpose he had a little red cross sewed in his upper garment. But then Queen Blanche his mother, the princes his brothers, the principal lords of his kingdom, and even the Bishop of Paris, sought by every means to make him change his purpose. They said to him: "My liege, what would become of your kingdom during your absence? Your health, too is not yet quite restored, and you are much enfeebled by your late illness. Moreover, that vow which leads you to quit your own States is not strictly binding, seeing that you made it at a moment when your mind was necessarily affected by your severe malady; in any case, it will be easily commuted." - "But are you very sure," asked St. Louis, "that my head was not right when I made this vow?" - "Quite sure, my liege, and that is nothing strange, the same thing occurs to every one who is afflicted with fever." - "In that case, here is my red cross," cried the king, tearing it from his shoulder. "But you will admit that I am now capable of understanding what I do." - "Oh! perfectly, my liege!" - "Well! I now make a vow with all my heart to go on a crusade to the Holy land; give me back my red cross!" And the holy prince had the cross sewed again on his shoulder, and continued with increased ardour his preparations for the crusade, no one daring after that

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to say a word in opposition to his pious design.

- PERE DANIEL, *Hist. de la France*, (*History of France*) IV., 381.

276. *The School of the English in Rome.* -

There was formerly in Rome, my dear children, a church which was known by the singular title of the *School, or College of the English*. To the following cause it owed its origin, at least in part. Edward the Third, King of England, a pious and God-fearing prince in the 14th century, in acknowledgement of the graces he had received from Heaven, resolved to make a pilgrimage to Rome. But the lords of the kingdom and his best councillors, fearing that his absence might give occasion for some disturbance, prevailed upon him to change the object of his vow and arrange matters so that he should not be obliged to leave England. Edward was too conscientious to be guided solely by the advice of interested, or unenlightened persons; he consulted the Pope himself, who wrote to him: "Since England might be exposed to danger during your absence, we dispense you from the obligation which you have imposed upon yourself, and we enjoin you, instead of your pilgrimage, to give to the poor the money you would have spent in your journey, and to build or establish a monastery in honour of St. Peter, prince of the Apostles. Believe that these works will be acceptable to God, for He is always with those who invoke Him sincerely, wherever they may be found." This answer completely tranquillized the king; he distributed a large sum of money amongst the poor, established in honour of St. Peter

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the famous Abbey of Westminster, and finally sent rich gifts to Rome. With the money sent by him was founded, or, at least, maintained for many years the church mentioned above, which was named the *School of the English*.

- BERAULT-BERCASTEL, *Hist. de l'Eglise*.

277. *A Pilgrim Instructed.* -

That beautiful book the *Imitation of Christ*, which you, doubtless, read very often, my dear friends, says in one place that *pilgrimages seldom sanctify the soul, especially when they are undertaken in a spirit of lightness or curiosity*. I have read the story of an Austrian merchant which goes to prove the truth of this fact. This worthy man had religion, but he made it consist in practices of his own choice. He had made a vow to go every year, in the month of September or October, on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of 'Maria Zell', one of the most famous shrines of the Austrian empire (as it was called in the 19th century); about 100,000 persons go thither every year. Our pilgrim had already made that pious journey twelve years, although he had to travel full eighty miles. The last time he went, he met within a short distance of 'Maria Zell' a peasant from a neighbouring village, with whom he amused himself chatting. "You are very fortunate, you people hereabouts," said he, "to be so near Our Lady's shrine. You, at least, can go there often to pray." - "Oh sir, we don't go so often as you think. On working-days we must work, since God has allotted it for us; and on Sunday we must edify our parish, by assisting regularly at Mass and Vespers

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in our own church. You see, sir, it seems to me that the sheep ought always to be, as far as possible, around their pastor, and not go running here and there after pastors whom they don't know or who don't know them. If I have a few pennies to spare I give them to the poor, and every one is satisfied. But saying this, I don't mean to blame others; every one has their own devotion." These words were a source of reflection to the merchant. He remembered that, under pretence of making his pilgrimages, it often happened that he neglected his most sacred duties, missing Mass, refusing alms to the poor, etc. On his return he spoke of it to his parish priest who, in fact, advised him to become a fervent and exemplary Christian, and to spend in alms and in good works the money he employed, every year, in making a pilgrimage which sanctified him so little.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II. 185.