

# DO NOT STEAL.

## CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

### CHAPTER VIII.

## SEVENTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

### *You Shall not Steal.*

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### I. - ON ROBBERY.

335. *Robbers Struck Motionless.* -

I have often told you, my dear friends, that God has eternity to punish sinners, and hence it is that He sometimes leaves them undisturbed. Nevertheless, He does not always act so, as is proved by the following pleasing anecdote. There was at Tremythonta, in the island of Cyprus, a holy bishop, named Spiridion, who lived in the fourth century. As he had been employed, before his episcopate, in keeping sheep, he made no difficulty, afterwards, of continuing the same exercise to earn his living, for in those days bishops were as poor as the faithful. Some robbers having entered his sheepfold by night, in order to rob it, felt themselves stopped by an invisible hand, and bound, as it were, with bonds that hindered them from escaping. St. Spiridion, coming in the morning, as usual, to turn out his flock, found them in this piteous state. As for them, ashamed to see themselves surprised in such a posture, they confessed their evil purpose.

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Christian compassion made him pray for them and after having unbound them by his words, he gave them a sheep, telling them by way of an agreeable joke, that he wished to reward them for the trouble they had had in watching his flock all night. He further told them that it would have been better for them to ask what they wanted than to endeavour to take it by fraud, and after remonstrating mildly with them on the life they were leading, he let them go in peace. Happy was it for those wretched men if they only came to understand how base and how degrading was the trade they followed.

- SOZOMENES, *Ecclesiastical History*, Chapter XI.

336. *For a Dead Cow.* -

The saints were men like us, my very dear friends, and it sometimes happened that they committed faults, even very grave ones. But then they had the humility to confess and do penance for them, in such wise that what should have turned to their confusion, became for them a crown of glory. St. Ephrem bewailed all his life long a folly of his youth. Going through a wood one winter's day, he saw a poor man's cow lying under a tree apparently fatigued or sick. Instead of driving her home to her owner, he had the cruelty to throw stones at her to make her rise, and then to chase her through the woods and fields, till, exhausted with fatigue, she fell dead in a ditch. The following night she was devoured by wolves or some other wild beasts. Ephrem kept his own secret, and no one suspected him; but God had seen what he did, and

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punished him in a very extraordinary manner. A month after this sad occurrence, he was sent by his parents to a village some distance off. Overtaken by night before he could reach there, he was obliged to ask lodging in a shepherd's hut; it was granted to him. Unhappily the shepherd was a drunkard, and, as he had drank a great deal that evening, he fell into a leaden sleep. Robbers availing themselves of the opportunity, came during the night and took away the greater part of his flock, without him perceiving. The owners hearing of the robbery, arrived almost immediately at the shepherd's hut, and there found Ephrem, whom they did not know. They accused him of having an understanding with the robbers, and being accessory to their crime.

It was no use for him to declare his innocence, he was dragged away to prison, and left there till the affair should have been cleared up; he passed eight days in prison. Whilst he was there, he had a dream, in which he saw a most beautiful young man, who told him that the imprisonment he endured, the chains with which he was loaded, were the punishment of the crime he had committed, in causing the death of the poor man's cow. Some days after, Ephrem's innocence in regard to the robbery being fully established, he was released from prison. He then set out to make restitution to the owner of the poor cow. It is he himself who relates all these particulars in his works, and he wept his sin till his last hour.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 356.

337. *St. Spiridion's Chest.* -

I know not, my dear

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friends, whether I have already spoken to you of St Spiridion, bishop of Tremythonta, in the island of Cyprus, who lived in the fourth century. But of course. I just told a story of him in Anecdote number 335. See how forgetful one becomes as one grows older!

This great saint was poor, notwithstanding his title of bishop, and derived his subsistence from a flock of sheep, which he often tended himself. But he was extremely charitable, and never refused to lend to those who were in need. When they came to borrow money of him, he gave them none with his own hands; he contented himself with showing where the chest was, and telling those who asked it of him to take whatever they required. When they came to bring him back the money they had borrowed, he made them put it in the chest, without observing whether they did or not. A man once abused this generous disinterestedness, for, thinking that he could easily cheat St. Spiridion, he took away with him again the money he pretended to put back in the box. Some time after, he had occasion to apply again to the holy bishop, and found him still disposed to assist him. St. Spiridion told him, as usual, to take what money he wanted out of the box; but the rogue found it empty. He immediately informed the Saint, who said to him:

"It is very strange that you are the only one who has found nothing in the box. Perhaps it is because you failed to put back what you took the last time. Examine yourself, and, if it be so, regard this accident as an effect of the justice of God, who thus punishes your avarice and deceit." The borrower then confessed his knavery, and St. Spiridion discovered the truth

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of what he had only been supposing.

- SOZOMENES, *Ecclesiastical History*, Chap. XI.

338. *St. Eloi's Arm-Chairs.* -

St. Eloi, as you are doubtless aware, my dear friends, was a goldsmith before he became a bishop. But what particularly distinguished him was his unfailing honesty and integrity. He was very different, in that respect, from so many other workmen who manage to keep for themselves a portion of the materials given them when they are not restrained by the fear of God's judgements. However, Clotaire II., king of France, having been informed of St. Eloi's skill as a gold-smith, cast his eyes upon him to carry out a design he had in his mind. He wanted to have a new sort of chair made all of gold and precious stones, and for that purpose he gave a great quantity of gold and jewels to St. Eloi, who received the whole with weight and measure, and went immediately to work on the model that had been given him. But, instead of one chair that was expected of him, he contrived to make two of the same size with the materials furnished. He, nevertheless, at first

presented only one to the king, who was well satisfied with it. St. Eloi having afterwards presented the second, Clotaire, expecting nothing more, was much surprised; he could not persuade himself that what was given to St. Eloi had been sufficient to make two seats; he could only be convinced by the weight, which was found to correspond exactly with that of the gold and jewels given. This showed how widely the

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holy goldsmith differed from some other jewellers, who, to conceal their fraud, say that there is always some waste in the melting down of metals.

- SAINT OUVEN, *Life of St. Eloi.*

339. *The House Built by St. Eloi.* -

A truly upright and honest man carries delicacy of conscience very far when there is question of the goods of others.

We find several examples of this in the life of St. Eloi; but here is one that has always struck me very much. Dagobert I., king of France, had given him a fine house in Paris. The holy goldsmith made so large a monastery of it that it contained almost three hundred religious, under the direction of the holy Abbess St. Aure. In order to finish this great edifice, a small space was required that belonged to the king. St. Eloi drew out the plan of it, so as to know its exact dimensions, and then asked it of the king. He obtained it without difficulty; but having afterwards discovered a mistake in the measurement of the ground, and that there was a small quantity more than he had told the king, he was so afflicted that, stopping the work immediately, he ran to the palace to ask pardon. This he did, prostrate on the ground as though he had committed a crime, and even offered to undergo any torment to expiate it. The king, much surprised by such great delicacy of conscience, said to the lords of his court and others who were present: "Behold the fidelity of those who live according to Jesus Christ. My governors and officers do not scruple to take possession of whole

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estates and lordships, and this servant of God, as you see, would not dare to take from me one inch of ground beyond what I gave him." Dagobert, wishing at the same time to reward such great probity doubled the donation he had made to St. Eloi.

- SAINT OUVEN, *Vie de St. Eloi. (Life of St Eloi.)*

340. *The Unwilling Camel-Driver.* -

To rob is forbidden, not only by the law of God, but also by the laws of men; hence it is that justice punishes that crime so severely. Here is a pleasing story that may instruct whilst amusing you. A Christian merchant, residing at Aleppo, in Syria, ruled by the Ottoman Empire of Turkey in Asia, had entrusted a Turkish camel-driver with a certain number of bales of silk to convey to Constantinople. He set out himself with the camel-driver, but had scarcely made half the journey when he fell sick, and could not keep up with the caravan, which arrived long before him. Some weeks having passed, the camel-driver seeing no sign of his man, supposed him to be dead, sold the bales of silk, became rich, and changed his profession. The Christian merchant at length arrived, found him out after a long search, and claimed his merchandise. The rogue pretended not to know him, and even dared to deny that he had ever been a camel-driver. The *cadi*, that is to say, the magistrate, before whom the affair was brought, said to the Christian: "What do you demand?"

- "Twenty bales of silk which I gave this man to transport on camel-back to Constantinople." - "And you, what have you to answer to that?" - "I know not what he

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means with his bales of silk and his camels; I never saw or knew him." - "But, Christian accuser, what proof can you give of what you advance?" The merchant, much embarrassed, although confident of being in the right, could give no other proofs except that illness had prevented him from following the camel-driver to Constantinople. The *cadi* then told them that they were a pair of fools, and ordered them to retire. He turned his back to them, and pretended to occupy himself with something else. But, as they were going out together, he went to a window and called out: "Ho, camel-driver, a word with you!" The Turk immediately turns his head, without thinking that he had denied that profession. Then the *cadi*, who had seen through it all, had

them brought back, administered a severe castigation to the robber, who confessed his fault, and condemned him, not only to pay the Christian merchant for his silk, but also a considerable fine for the false oath he had taken.

- FILASSIER, *Dict. d'Educ.*, II., 151.

341. *A Hermit's Field of Barley.* -

It often happens in the world, my young friends, that people do their business at the expense of others; that is called address, cleverness, tact; but in reality it is cheating and injustice, and the seventh commandment of God expressly forbids it. In 1757, during the famous Seven Years' War, which took place between Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, and most of the other powers of Europe, a captain of cavalry was ordered to go and forage in a certain district. He

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sets out with his company. Arrived at the place appointed, he perceived that it was a secluded valley where there was nothing but woods. All at once he discovered a little hut, he knocks at the door, and an old hermit with a white beard comes to open it.

"Father," said the captain, "show me a field where my men can forage." - "I will go immediately, captain!"

He places himself at the head of the horse-men and conducts them out of the valley. After a quarter of an hour's march, they came to a fine field of barley: "Here is what we want," said the captain. "Let us go a little farther," answered the old hermit, "and you shall be better satisfied." So they went a little farther, found another field of barley, and he told them: "Now you can forage." The horsemen immediately dismount, reap the field from one end to the other, tie the barley in sheaves and place it on the backs of their horses. On the way back, the captain said to the hermit: "Father, you took us too far; the first field of barley we came to was better than this." - "So it was, captain, but it was not mine, and this belongs to me." There, you see, children, is delicacy of conscience; there is what you do not find amongst people of the world, who are actuated and brought to a good conscience only by the honour and good faith of an honest man.

- FILASSIER, *Dict. d'Educ.*, I., 548.

## II. - ON USURY AND EXTORTION.

342. *Down One-Half!* -

Let me tell you, to-day, my dear friends, the frightful story of a wretched

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usurer, who speculated on public misery to make unlawful profits. Shame, eternal shame to those wretched monopolizers! It was in the fourteenth century, I believe. A terrible famine having broken out at Rimini, in Italy, the exorbitant price of grain threw desolation amongst the inhabitants. It was only the usurer of whom I have spoken to you that rejoiced, because his granaries were full. Nevertheless, although the corn was already beyond all price, he refused to sell his, hoping that it would rise still higher, and in order to escape importunities he even retired to the country. Every day he went to walk on the high road, and never failed to ask the people coming from the town how corn was selling. When told that it was still going up, he heaved a compassionate sigh, but laughed within himself. But it happened that two wealthy inhabitants of Rimini having bought enormous quantities of grain in Apulia, in the kingdom of Naples, in order to provide for the necessity of the moment, the corn fell at a single stroke to half the price. The usurer, who proposed to return that very day to the town, to profit by the misery of his townsmen, inquired, as usual, of the passers by, what was the price of corn. What was his surprise to see joyous troops of villagers coming along, driving before them asses loaded with corn "What has happened?" he asked, trembling with anxiety. "Praises be to God!" cried all the peasants at once, "corn is down one-half this morning!" -- "*Down one-half!*" slowly repeated the astonished

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usurer. He runs to the city, people meet him, salute him, bid him good morning, but to all these attentions he can only reply with these words slowly articulated: "*Down one-half!*" On reaching his home, his wife and children could get no other answer from him. He took to his bed, his ghastly countenance giving rise to serious alarm. They run for a doctor, who arrives in all haste, and asks him what is the matter with him. "*Down one-half!*" murmurs the unhappy man. A priest arrives, wants to hear his confession, speaks to him of trusting in the mercy of God. "*Down one-half!*" repeats the dying man, whom every one regards as stricken with madness. His condition became worse and worse; medicine and care were alike ineffectual, and the infamous usurer expired articulating one last time the words that seemed to be the warrant of divine justice:

*Down one-half!*

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 411.

343. *The Alms of the Bakers of Lyons.* -

I think I have already told you, children, that I am very glad when I see rogues, extortioners or persons who are too covetous, taken in their own snares. That often happens by the dispensation of God, who cannot bear injustice, and often punishes it even in this life.

The following story goes to prove the assertion. The bakers of Lyons, in France, wanting to raise the price of their bread, about 1775, if I am not mistaken, went to M. Dugas, provost of the merchants of that city. After a long explanation of their reasons, they retired without waiting for his answer, but left on the table

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a purse containing two hundred gold pieces, that is to say, about four thousand francs, not doubting but that this new kind of advocate (the bribe) would effectually plead their cause. Some days after, they again presented themselves to receive the magistrate's answer. "Gentlemen," said M. Dugas in a good-natured, off-hand way, yet with a certain degree of sly humour, "I have weighed your reasons in the scales of justice, and I have not found them of sufficient weight. I do not think it necessary that the people should suffer for an unwarrantable rise in the price of flour, which cannot last for any length of time. For the rest, I have distributed the money you left me amongst the hospitals of the city, because I thought you intended it for no other use. I see plainly that since you find yourselves in a position to give such a donation for charity, you cannot lose as much as you say in your business." So saying, the worthy provost saluted them very graciously, and retired. The bakers retired, too, but the chronicler of the event seems to have taken a malicious pleasure in applying to them that line with which La Fontaine ends his fable of *The Fox and the Crow*:

Jurant, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus.

(Swearing, but too late, that he should be caught there no more.)

- FILASSIER, *Dict. d'Educ.*, II., 124.

344. *Wood That Costs Very Dear.* -

There is nothing more revolting to me, my very dear friends, than to see wretches abuse the misery of their poor

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fellow-creatures to extort money from them, selling them things for two or three times their value. So I am not sorry when I see something come upon them that pays them back in their own coin. This is just what happened in 1794, in a little village of Westphalia, one of the provinces of Prussia. A poor French refugee was in that village in the depth of winter, a most severe winter, too; he wanted to purchase some wood, and applied to an individual whom he met in the street with a load of wood. The townsman, seeing that he had a stranger to deal with, put an exorbitant price on the wood; he asked three pounds, that is to say, about sixty francs, although it was worth no more than eight or ten. The bargain made and the wood delivered, the wood seller goes to have his breakfast at an inn, and is not ashamed to boast of having *plucked* a stranger, selling

him for sixty francs what was worth but eight.

"It was all fair", added he, laughing, "as the wood belonged to me." His breakfast ended, he asks the landlord for his bill. The latter, indignant at the man's villainy, coolly told him it was three pounds or sixty francs. - "How? three pounds for a piece of bread, a piece of cheese, and two glasses of beer!" - "Yes, sir, what you took was my property, and I have a right to put what price I please upon it, so, if you are not satisfied to pay my demand, let us go before a magistrate." - "That is just what I want; let us go at once." When the magistrate had heard the two stories, he hesitated not to decide in favour of the

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innkeeper, and condemned the hard hearted man to pay the sixty francs demanded. As soon as the worthy innkeeper received the money, he gave eight francs to the wood seller less five francs for his breakfast, and went with the other fifty two francs to the unfortunate Frenchman, who had been the victim of the morning's shameful bargain, just as the magistrate had suggested (but not ordered).

- *Cat. de Rodez*, V., 374.

345. *A Cure of Human Fat.* -

A man who has enriched himself by cheating and defrauding may sometimes applaud himself for having *done his business* so well, as they say in the world; but, dear friends, there will come a time when he will not be quite so happy, not to speak of the eternity of torments which awaits him, if he does not make restitution.

Here is an interesting story on that subject. A very rich man, whose name charity forbids me to mention, fell dangerously ill; it was at the end of the 18th century, certain sores that he had on his body were already beginning to mortify, and every one saw plainly that there was no chance of his recovery. His whole fortune had been acquired by fraud and extortion, and yet he would not hear of restitution, under pretence that his three children would be reduced to indigence. Hearing of this, a learned and pious clergyman says to some one: "Go and tell him that I have a cure for mortification, and I am sure he will ask to see me." Just as the priest expected, he no sooner heard that an old priest had a cure for mortification than he must absolutely see him. "They tell me, sir," said he, "that you have a sure remedy for mortification."

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- "I have, sir, the cure is infallible. It will not give you any pain, it is very simple, but it is extraordinarily dear." -- "No matter, if it cost ten thousand francs. I am resolved to have it. In what does it consist?" - "This is it: to have melted over the mortified wound a little human fat from a living person. It does not require much, so that, for ten thousand francs you will, doubtless, find some one that will consent to have their hand, for instance, burned - for a short quarter of an hour." -- "Alas! father, I fear I could find no one to do it for that price." - "Well! then, it seems to me a very easy thing to find some one to agree to do it. You have three sons who love you well; send for the eldest and say to him: 'Son, I do not doubt your affection for me, so I will make you the heir of all my wealth, if you will only give me one last proof of it. It is to burn your left hand for a quarter of an hour so that the grease which will drop from it may cure me.' Should he refuse you this mark of affection, you will make the same proposal to the second, and, in case of refusal, to the third; one of the three will be sure to accept it, in order to become your heir." The patient followed this 'wise' counsel, and had his three sons brought to him one by one; but alas! none of them would consent to what their father required. They even could not help saying amongst themselves:

"What a queer man father is to ask us to do such a thing as that!" Then the ingenious clergyman, left alone with the dying man, said to him earnestly:

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- "Now, sir, would not you be very foolish to undergo the fire of hell for all eternity, to enrich children who would not suffer even their hand to be burned for one quarter of an hour for your sake? You must admit that it would be a piece of folly, at which they would be the first to laugh" -- "You are right, reverend father! I confess I never thought of it in that light.

"I beg of you, father, not to go till I have confessed my sins, and taken means to repair all the injustice I have committed." He, in fact, did so, and died reconciled with God.

- LASSAUSSE, *Cat. de l'Empire*, 264.

346. *The Weight of a Sack of Earth.* -

Listen to this story, my young friends, and try to profit by it: An inhabitant of Rhenish Prussia, in the 1860's I believe, already very rich, but not yet content, contrived by his adroit cunning and knavery to take from a poor woman a small field adjoining his own vast property; it was her only means of living. Overwhelmed by this misfortune and too poor to enter a law-suit, she goes to the spoiler and tells him: "Since you must have my little field, which came down to me from my fathers and was my only means of support, allow me, at least to fill a sack with the earth of it, that I may keep as a memento in my house." -- "If that will content you, you may have it," said the hard-hearted man dryly and contemptuously. She then took the largest sack she could find, filled it with the earth of her field, tied it with a strong cord, and tried to place it on her shoulders. But, being unable to succeed, she besought the new owner to assist her. In order to

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get rid of her, he was fain to render her this last service; but he, too, was unable to lift the sack. He was going to call one of his servants, when the poor woman, inspired by the justice of her cause, said to him in a solemn and dignified tone: "Stay as you are, sir - you have taken my field from me, so you may keep my sack. Only tell me one thing: you have found it impossible to raise this sack of earth, how will you, then, bear on your conscience, unhappy man, the weight of my whole field? Are you not afraid that the just God will make use of it to crush you?" At these words, so vehemently uttered, the spoiler turned pale, a cold shiver ran through his frame, and some days after, he gave the poor woman back her spot of ground.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.* III., 374.

347. *The Ill-paid Servants.* -

One of the most crying crimes, dear friends, even in the eyes of men, is that of refusing to pay servants or working-people their wages; or, what is just the same thing, fraudulently withholding from them the whole or part of it. Those poor unhappy people are sufficiently to be pitied in being obliged to serve others, without depriving them of the little they earn so hardly. Furthermore, my good friends, God never blesses those who act in this way. Here is a proof of it. In a village of Upper Austria, the German name of which is not easily remembered, there dwelt a rich proprietor who was, moreover, endowed with great skill in managing his affairs, at least, according to the world.

When engaging servants, he always promised them

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high wages by the year, and thus managed to find good and capable ones. But when, after having exhausted themselves by hard toil, those poor servants expected to receive, at the end of the year, the fine wages promised them, they were cruelly disappointed, and in this way: Their master admitted, indeed, that he had promised such a sum, but he had taken care to draw up a detailed account of a thousand little expenses, which he pretended to charge to the servants. On one, he reckoned the expense of farriery and medicine for his ailing horses; from another he deducted the quantity of milk which the cows ought to have given and did not; one he made pay for the damage done to the agricultural and other implements used; another, the crockery accidentally broken in the course of the year. Nothing could be more unjust or more unreasonable than these charges, but justice could do nothing, because the master always made his arrangements so as to throw the blame on the servants. The latter went away, and he always contrived by cunning and by fine promises to find others on the same conditions. This state of things ought to have made him rich, it would seem, in a short time. Not at all, my dear children! As I told you just now, God cannot bless those who commit such crying injustice towards their domestics. Our rich townsman became so reduced in circumstances that all he had was sold at auction, and he himself had to end his days in an hospital.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, III., 376,

### III. - DEPOSITS AND THINGS FOUND.

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348. *Two Hundred Silver Pennies Found.* -

What we find, my dear children, we cannot keep, since it does not belong to us; we must even make all reasonable possible search to find out the real owner. St. Augustine relates an anecdote on this subject which he heard himself from a worthy man, when he was in Milan. This man was so poor that he hired himself to a schoolmaster. He one day found a bag containing about 200 silver pennies of Roman money, which might be nearly 300 francs or more. As he was faithful to the law of God, he knew well that he must give up what he had found, but he knew not to whom he was bound to give it. Then he wrote this notice on a paper, which he posted up in a public place:

*Notice.*

**ANY ONE WHO HAS LATELY LOST MONEY CAN HAVE IT BY  
APPLYING AT SUCH A NUMBER, IN SUCH A STREET.**

It so happened that he who had lost the money, and was looking for it everywhere in great distress, saw this notice, read it, and went in all haste to seek this poor man. The latter put several questions to him concerning the marks, the texture and the seal of the bag, the amount of money contained in it, etc., fearing to be mistaken in giving it to a man who claimed it without its belonging to him. The claimant answered exactly all the questions put to him, and the poor man gave him what he had found.

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Full of joy and gratitude, the owner immediately offered him the sum of twenty pennies, which was the tenth part of what the bag contained. But see children, the delicacy of those who are really Christians. The man who had found the money, poor as he was, absolutely refused to receive the reward. He was offered ten, which he likewise refused; the owner, at last, came down to five, but all in vain. When the generous owner saw this species of obstinacy, he exclaimed "You will receive nothing? well! I declare to you I have lost nothing." And he threw the bag on the street. Overcome by this singular argument, the poor man at length accepted what was offered him, but the day had not passed till he had distributed all of it amongst the poor.  
- ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermons*, No. 178.

349. *A Tartar's Purse.* -

The world talks loudly of honour, loyalty, probity ; but for my part, children, I have more confidence in one good Christian than in fifty people who are honest according to the world. It is related, in the *Lettres edificantes*, that a brilliant Tartar officer riding on horseback through one of the gates of Peking, the capital of China, happened to let his purse fall. It was picked up by a poor Chinese workman, who had the happiness of being a Christian, and who ran after the horseman to give it to him. But the latter, unaware of the motive the man had in following him, threw a contemptuous look upon him, and spurred his horse to avoid him. The poor Christian continued to follow him at a distance,

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and entered the house into which he saw him go. The Tartar, much exasperated, asked him haughtily who he was and what he wanted. "My lord, you lost your purse at the city gate; I picked it up, and ran after you to restore it." - "It is singular that you should act so, since the laws of the empire permit one to keep anything they find." - "Yes, but I am a Christian, and my religion obliges me to restore what I find to the rightful owner." This reply excited the Tartar's curiosity; he wished to know what sort of religion that might be, came to the Catholic missionary, and was instructed in the mysteries of our holy religion.  
- REYRE, *Anec. Chret.*, 239.

350. *The Barber of Peking.* -

It is only our holy religion, my friends, that can prescribe duties of conscience which are not seen; other laws may occupy themselves with exterior actions, but they are powerless in regulating thoughts. A Jesuit missionary, who was preaching the gospel in China, in the 18th century, relates the following story of a barber. As is usual there with people of his profession, this man went from side to side in the streets of Peking, shaking an instrument composed of knotted cords, which, striking against each other, made a peculiar sound to warn those who wished to be shaved to present themselves to him. He one day found a purse in which there were twenty gold pieces. He takes it up, and looks around to see if he could discover the person that lost it. After a careful scrutiny of the people around him, it seemed to him that it might

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possibly belong to a gentleman who was walking before him; he accosts him, and asks him if he had lost anything. The gentleman searches his pockets, and cries in dismay: "I have lost my purse, containing twenty gold pieces." -- " Well! don't be uneasy, here it is, just as you lost it." -- "But who are you? what is your name? where do you live?" -- "It is little matter to you who I am, what my name is, or where I live; it suffices for you to know that I am a Christian, and one of those who practise the religion of the Master of heaven. It forbids us not only to take what is in houses, but even to keep what we find by chance." Hearing this, the gentleman, full of admiration for a doctrine so pure and so disinterested, went immediately to the church of the Christians, and asked to be instructed in the true religion. This charming story, my dear children, was related by the missionary, the very year in which it happened, to the Emperor of China himself, who could, thereby, judge of the difference which exists between his religion and ours.

- REYRE, *Anec. Chret.*, 240.

351. *Thirty Thousand Francs Found.* -

We have no right, dear friends, to touch what does not belong to us; so, when money is placed in our hands by way of deposit, it must be returned exactly as we received it. A worthy man in an Eastern city, the name of which I did not learn, was to bring 30,000 francs to a notary. He learned that a missionary was going to preach, in a little while, in a neighbouring church; and, in order to have the pleasure of hearing him, he

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went to the house of a person of his acquaintance whom he knew to be very honest, and requested him to keep the money for him while he went to hear the sermon. "Open that cupboard," said he, "and put into it what you will." He opened the cupboard, placed his bag in it, and went to church. After the sermon, he came to claim his money. "What money?" he was asked in a tone of surprise. "Why, the bag of 30,000 francs I placed in that cupboard." - "If you put it there, take it." He ran to get his money, but it was no longer there.

He thought, at first, that it was a jest, but the serious and angry way in which the owner of the house spoke, convinced him that he had been robbed. He goes out, and, instead of repairing to the notary's, he goes to the house of one of his friends, where the preacher happened to be; he tells them the story of the deposit. At the end of a quarter of an hour, the missionary goes out, without saying anything, and repairs in all haste to the house of the thief. Without entering into any detail, he accosts him directly and tells him plainly: "I come for the 30,000 francs that Mr. Such-a-one left in your charge, about three hours ago, and which you deny having received. You think, perhaps, that you did that without being seen, but I have a witness to produce against you. Give up the money, or you are ruined forever." At the word *witness*, the unhappy man changed countenance, and appeared visibly agitated. Seeing that, the missionary draws a crucifix from his pocket and places it before his eyes,

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saying to him still more earnestly: "There is the witness against you, and to whom you must one day account for your criminal action!" The culprit confessed his crime and gave up the 30,000 francs; the missionary took it back himself to the poor man from whom it had been taken, who little expected to see it again.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, V., 416.

352. *Emile's Pretty Little Cannon.* -

You all know, my good little friends, that we are never permitted to take what does not belong to us; you cannot even take the least thing at home without the permission of your parents. You must not do, then, what was done by a little boy of seven years old whom I knew. He was called Emile, and lived not far from the town of Lens in France. One day, returning from there, he appeared so gay that every one noticed it. His father sees in his hands a little copper cannon, mounted on two pretty little wheels of the same metal. "Ha! ha! my boy," said he, "you want to join the artillery. What a pretty little cannon! Who gave you that nice present?" - "No one, papa, I bought it in Lens." - "And pray, who gave you the money?" said the father quickly. "Papa, it was a little twenty-sous piece that I found." - "And where did you find it, sir?" - "I found it on the mantel-piece in your room" - "You shall dine on dry bread sir, to-day. What is on my mantel-piece is not lost at all, and, even if it were, you have no right to take it and dispose of it."

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, V., 360