

DO NOT LIE.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER IX.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

You Shall not Bear False Witness.

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I. - FALSE TESTIMONY.

353. *Dogs Punishing a Perjurer.* -

There are few amongst you, my little friends, who do not remember the story of the wicked Achab (often spelt Ahab) and of Queen Jezebel (often spelt Jezabel), his wife, still more impious than himself. The king, wishing to enlarge his gardens, could never prevail upon a virtuous Israelite, named Naboth, to sell him his vineyard, which lay close by. Jezebel excited the king to take possession of it by force, and put Naboth to death. For that purpose, she bribed two false witnesses, who swore, that Naboth had blasphemed against God and spoke evil of the king. The unfortunate man was taken outside the city and stoned to death without ever being heard in his own defence. Achab, apprised of his death, went in his chariot to take possession of his victim's vineyard, when the prophet Elias (otherwise known as Elijah) came to meet him, and announced to him, on the part of the Lord, *that the*

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dogs who had licked the blood of the just Naboth should one day lick his own blood in the same place; that his posterity should perish miserably to the very last shoot, and that the dogs should in like manner devour the body of Jezebel, his wife. This decree, as just as it was terrible, was executed to the letter, some years after, as you have read in your Sacred History.

- *IV. Kings, (II Kings in Hebrew-based Bibles) Chap. IX.*

354. *The Trial of Susanna.* -

Human justice may be at fault, my dear friends, let it take what precautions it may; but divine justice is sure to find out the guilty and punish them sooner or later. It often overtakes them even in this life, as we learn from the story of the chaste Susanna, which I am going to tell you, although you may have, perhaps, read it in Sacred History. Whilst the Jews were captives in Babylon, they were accustomed to elect every year two men of a certain age, to decide the disputes that might turn up amongst them. One evening, after these judges had held their court at the house of a virtuous Israelite, named Joakim, they walked out through his garden, which was large and fine. They there found Susanna, wife of Joakim. She was a person endowed with the rarest and most admirable qualities. The two old men approached her; and trampling under foot all respect for their age and for their dignity, they were not ashamed to do the devil's work, threatening her with death if she refused to offend God. Far from being intimidated, the chaste Susanna said to them: "Never will I consent to sin

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in the presence of the Lord, who sees me; I would rather die innocent than live guilty." This courageous resistance, instead of making them blush for shame, served only to irritate them, and they swore to be revenged. Next day, having assembled the people, they accused Susanna of an enormous crime and stated that they had themselves seen her commit it, under a tree in her garden. No one could refuse to believe them, because they were venerable by their age and by the office of judge which they exercised. Consequently, the unfortunate woman was condemned to be stoned to death, and she was immediately taken outside the city, that this unjust sentence might be executed. Whilst the crowd was passing along the streets of the city, God inspired a child of twelve years old, the young prophet Daniel, to reveal Susanna's innocence. He all at once cried out: *I am not guilty of the innocent blood you are going to shed.* Young as he was, God permitted that what he said attracted attention; he was questioned, a short discussion followed, and finally they all went back to the place where the trial had taken place.

There, the little prophet takes one of the iniquitous judges aside, and asks him in a low voice under which tree he had seen Susanna. *Under a mastic tree,* answered the old man. He privately put the same question to the other: *I saw her under a turpentine tree,* replies the latter. With these two contradictory answers the inspired child had no difficulty in convincing the people of the imposture of the two

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accusers and the innocence of the accused. Thus, by a secret judgement of God, those corrupt old men were condemned to undergo the very punishment they would have inflicted on the virtuous Israelite.

- *Daniel*, Chap. XIII.

355. *The Hand cut off by St. Athanasius.* -

The Arians, those audacious and restless heretics, who dared to deny the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, had no more formidable adversary than the great St. Athanasius, patriarch of Alexandria, in Egypt. There was no intrigue which they did not employ, no means they did not attempt, to try to ruin him; they had him banished seven times. But the most singular accusation they brought against him was this: At the Council of Tyre, they accused the holy prelate of having cruelly killed Arsenus, Bishop of the Meletians, and of having cut off his hand to make use of in magical operations and invocations of the devil. Before bringing forward this grave charge, they had taken care to spirit away Bishop Arsenus to a distant part of a remote country; furthermore, they presented to the assembly a hand, which they said belonged to the murdered bishop. You may well think, dear friends, that this was a serious affair; it was carefully discussed, and St. Athanasius having neither proof nor witness to defend himself, his enemies prevailed. But God does not abandon His servants; what did He do? He ordained it so that Arsenus escaped from his retreat and came to the accused patriarch. The latter goes to the council

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with the supposed dead man, but taking care to make him hide one of his hands in his cloak. What was every one's surprise and stupefaction when St. Athanasius presented Arsenus living and well!

"I am accused of having killed this bishop; see now if it be true, unless, indeed, I raised him to life again on purpose to bring him hither! I am, likewise, accused of having cut off his hand; Arsenus, show them your other hand" (Arsenus draws it from under his cloak and shows it); "you see he has still his two hands, and I think God gave him no more." I leave you to think, my dear friends, on what side were shame and confusion, and on what side indignation and just anger.

- TILLEMONT, *Ecclesiastical History*, VIII., 45.

356. *The Accusing Axe.* -

Let us beware, dear friends, of rashly condemning others, even when there are some appearances against them. People have often had cause to repent being too hasty, even after having taken many precautions; how would it be, then, if none were taken? St. Augustine himself relates what was near happening to one of his friends, in consequence of a rash judgement. At the time when Alipus was studying under him, at Carthage, he was taken for a robber, and arrested, whilst walking alone opposite the hall of justice, turning over in his mind something that had been given him to recite. The thing occurred in this way: Another scholar, who was

really a robber though pretending to be a student, having gained, unperceived, the terrace opening on the Goldsmiths' street, took to chopping the lead off the railing of the terrace in order to break into the gold work-rooms, with

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an axe which he had brought with him under his cloak. At the noise he made, the goldsmiths, who were under the terrace, began to cry out, and sent people to seize the robber. The latter, seeing himself discovered, and hearing the shouts, takes to flight and leaves his axe behind, lest it should be found in his possession.

Alipus, who had not seen him go up on the terrace, seeing him go away so fast, and anxious to know the cause of his flight, goes up himself, finds the axe and takes it. He was looking at it in surprise, when the people, sent to see whence the noise proceeded, came to the spot. Seeing the axe in his hand, they seized him and brought him before the magistrate to be tried, thinking they had really caught the robber in the fact.

Alipus had no witness but God: He came to his assistance in due time. For, as they were leading him to prison, or, perhaps, even to punishment, a celebrated architect came along, recognized Alipus, and took him aside to inquire how all this came to pass. Alipus having told him the whole affair, the architect, notwithstanding all the tumult, obliged the populace to follow him, and went straight to the house of the real thief. A child of his, who had even followed him to the terrace, having come to the door, Alipus recognized him and told the architect. The latter showed the axe to the child and asked him whose it was. *It is ours*, said he simply, and answered with the same ease all the questions put to him. Thus all the blame fell on the inmates of that house. The

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people were all much astonished, and Alipus, fully exonerated, learned by his own experience how careful we should be to discern the truth and not to believe accusations too easily, even when they appear to be well founded, if we would not expose ourselves to condemn others rashly.

- ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, Book VI., Ch. IX.

II. - ON FALSEHOOD.

357. *St. Athanasius and His Bark.* -

Lying is never permissible, my dear friends, as you well know; but we are not always obliged to make the truth known.

Thus, instead of answering a question directly, you may answer it adroitly, provided you do not tell a falsehood. I find a curious example of this in the life of St. Athanasius, who was so long persecuted by the Arians. One day, having been compelled to fly in all haste, he entered a boat which he found on the banks of the Nile, and went up the river towards the Thebaid. The person sent to kill him, hearing of his escape, pursued him as fast as he could; but he was outstripped by a friend of Athanasius', who apprised the saint that he was closely pursued. His companion then advised him to make for the desert. He, on the contrary, turned his boat to go down again to Alexandria, whence he came, "to show," he said, "that He who protects us is mightier than those who persecute us." All he then did was to conceal himself at the bottom of the bark. They

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soon met the boat in which was the persecutor, who asked them if Athanasius was far off, or if it was long since they left him. Guessing the Saint's intention in ordering the bark to be turned, the people in his boat simply answered: "He is not very far away, and you can easily overtake him if you wish." Hearing this the other passed on and continued his pursuit. You may easily understand that he did not find the holy patriarch.

It was thus that the great St. Athanasius, without having recourse to falsehood, but simply by means of an evasive though true reply, escaped the hands of his enemies.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 449.

358. *Burial of a Living Person.* -

Amongst the falsehoods punished by God in the most signal manner, even in this life, few have struck me so much as the one I am about to relate. St. James, Bishop of Nisibe (or Nisibis), in Mesopotamia, who lived in the fourth century, going one day into a neighbouring town, some poor persons came to him, and besought him to give them the means of burying one of them, who made believe to be dead, although he was not. The good bishop cheerfully granted their request; he even offered up a prayer to God for the deceased; he begged Him to forgive him his sins and receive him amongst the blessed. At the moment when he uttered these words, the person who was pretending to be dead did really die, and the saint gave what was necessary to bury his body. When he had gone a little way the authors of this

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shameful stratagem told him who was lying down to rise up. But seeing that he did not hear them, and that his pretended death had become real, they ran after St. James, and, throwing themselves at his feet, they confessed their crime, adding that poverty was the cause of their imposture. They conjured him to forgive them their fault, and to restore the dead to life. Then that admirable man, imitating the clemency of Our Lord, granted what they asked, and, by a new miracle, restored to life by his prayers he whom God had struck dead in punishment of his deceit.

- THEODORET, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book I.

359. *The Archbishop of Canterbury.* -

I think I have already told you, my good friends, that we must never say anything contrary to the truth, even to extricate ourselves from some difficulty. But we may either suppress the truth, or answer in an evasive manner, as did St. Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, in England. Persecuted unjustly by King Henry II, his sovereign, he was several times obliged to fly and conceal himself. He took refuge once in a hermitage near Sempringham, where he remained three whole years. During that time he walked always on foot, clothed as a monk, and bearing the name of *Brother Christian*. Nevertheless, being unaccustomed to travel in such a toilsome way he had much to suffer, especially during a cold and rainy autumn. One day, overcome by fatigue, he threw himself on the ground, and said to those who accompanied him: "I can go no farther; try to procure

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me a little nourishment, or I cannot walk." They brought him a poor horse, without either bridle or saddle, laid their cloaks on the animal's back, and placed the archbishop thereon, though with great difficulty. In this sorry plight they journeyed on for some time, looking for something to eat, when they saw approaching at full speed some armed men, who addressed themselves directly to St. Thomas, and said abruptly: "Are not you the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom we have been long seeking?" - "My friends," he replied, "judge for yourselves; is this the equipage of an archbishop?" They did not recognize him, and put no further questions. Thus, by a very simple word, he got out of his difficulty, without offending the good God.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 452.

360. *Is it Lawful to Deceive Robbers?* -

We are never allowed to tell a falsehood, my dear friends, even though it were to save our life, our honour, our purse or to extricate ourselves from any embarrassment of any kind whatsoever. The saints were scrupulous in this regard. But we may either suppress the truth, or answer in an evasive manner I have read in the *Life of St. John of Kenty*, a Polish priest, that three times in the course of his life he visited Rome, the Holy City. He always travelled on foot, carrying on his back the little bag that contained his linen, his effects, and the bread which was his nourishment. In one of his toilsome journeys he was attacked by highway robbers, who took from him everything they could. After having carefully searched him, they asked him if he had nothing else which they could take. He

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reflected a moment, and answered that he had nothing more of any value; they allowed him to continue his journey, and went away. Saint John of Kenty had only gone some paces, when he remembered that he had sewed some gold pieces in his cloak, according to the custom of travellers from his country. He immediately ran after the robbers, confessed to them that he had not told the truth, because he had forgotten this money, and freely offered it to them. Astonished at this delicacy of conscience, not only did the robbers refuse to accept the money, but even gave him back what they had taken from him.

- GODESCARD, *Vies des Saints*, (*Lives of Saints*) 20th October.

361. *Little Washington and the Cherry-Tree.* -

How beautiful it is, my good young friends, to see a little child tell the truth even at the risk of being punished or reprimanded! For we are never to tell a lie were it even to save our life. The illustrious George Washington, who afterwards became President of the United States, had received, as a present, when he was six years old, a little hatchet, with which he kept chopping everything that came in his way. He one day amused himself stripping the bark off a magnificent English cherry-tree, which appeared to be completely spoiled. His father, perceiving this mischief, angrily inquired who had done it, adding that he would rather have lost a hundred dollars than that tree, which he had prized very highly. No one could find out the culprit. At length, little George, who was not present at the moment, being one day in the

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garden with his hatchet, his father perceived him and immediately guessed that he was the author of the mischief. He asked him if he knew who it was that had spoiled his cherry-tree. The child hesitated a moment, then answered: "I cannot tell a lie, papa, - it was I that cut it with my little hatchet." Hearing this confession so frank and honest, Washington's father could not be angry with the child.

"Come to my arms, my son!" said he, "the honesty with which you confess your fault repays me an hundred-fold for the loss of my cherry-tree. I value your candour and sincerity more than I would a thousand cherry-trees, though they were loaded with the finest fruit." In after years, my friends, it was observed that the great man of whose infant years I have been telling you this anecdote, never could and never did violate truth in any case whatever; so true it is that people retain all their lives the good habits contracted in their youth.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez*, V., 467.

362. *The Protestant Catholic.* -

Falsehood is odious in all circumstances, my friends, but it is much more so in matters of religion; it is then an unpardonable crime. (Though the good and merciful God always has space in his heart for a sincere repentant.) It is related that a Protestant gentleman, who lived in Austrian Poland, around the year 1780, wishing to obtain the situation of clerk of a court, which, according to the laws of the country, could not be given to a heretic, made believe that he was a Catholic. His shameful fraud was not discovered until some time after, and word was brought of it to the Emperor Joseph II., who was not himself very scrupulous on the score of

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religion. The Governor of Lemberg was charged to investigate the affair. Our gentleman confessed that he was a Protestant.

"But," added he, as if to justify himself, "I am a Catholic in heart, and to profess the faith openly I am only waiting till I have secured some property left me in Saxony, which I could not obtain unless I outwardly practised Protestantism." In making his report to the Emperor, the Governor of Lemberg was in favour of being lenient, on account of the gentleman's capacity and talents. "Talents!" replied Joseph II. quickly; "who can ever depend on the word of a man who is not ashamed to lie on the subject of religion, and to sport with what there is most sacred? Let him be dismissed immediately!" It was done accordingly, and who will venture to say that the Emperor's decision was not a just one?

- FILASSIER, *Dict. Hist. d'Educ.*, II., 593.

363. *The Little Martyr of Truth.* -

Some three or four years ago I read a story that went the round of the papers, and which I could not read without shedding tears. I am sure, children, it will affect you in the same way. An American paper mentions the case as being brought before the authorities in the town of Madison. A good little boy of nine years old, an orphan from his earliest infancy, was adopted by a farmer named Marquette, from the hospital in Milwaukee. Some time after his installation in his new family, the little boy having had occasion to remark some very bad conduct on the part of the farmer's wife, thought it his duty to inform the husband.

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But the woman denied the charge so vehemently that the farmer was convinced that his wife had been calumniated. The wife then insisted that the boy should be whipped till he retracted what he had said; and the husband taking a scourge, suspended the child from a beam in the room and whipped him for nearly two hours with so much barbarity that the blood streamed on the ground. He stopped then and asked the child if he still persisted in what he had said.

"Father," said he, "I have told the truth, and I cannot retract to tell a lie."

Trampling under foot every better feeling, the cruel woman again insisted that her husband should continue what she called *his duty*. The blows commenced again with renewed fury, and continued till the poor little fellow fell almost lifeless into the arms of his executioner, to whom he said, throwing his little arms round his neck: "Father, father, I am dying! - I have told the truth!" And he expired. The Court at Madison took cognizance of the affair. The miserable woman was convicted of the crime of which she was accused, her husband was condemned as guilty of murder on the person of his adopted child; finally, the young orphan was proclaimed *the martyr of truth*.

- *Recompenses Hebdom.*, No. XLIX, page 24.

III. - ON SLANDER.

364. - *A Sack of Sand.* -

If we knew our own faults well, my dear friends, we would take care not to

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speak of those of others, and we would, consequently never make ourselves guilty of slander. It is related in the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, that St. Prior, a hermit of Nitria, was very harsh and severe towards himself, but indulgent and charitable to others. One day, when he was present at an assembly of solitaries in the desert of Scete, adjoining his own, they began to confer together on divers subjects of piety. After a little while, some of the monks came to speak of a grave fault committed by a brother who was not there. St. Prior at first kept silent, but afterwards, perceiving that they still continued to wound charity, he quitted the assembly, took a sack, filled it with sand and laid it on his shoulders. He also took a small basket, put a little sand in the bottom and took it in his hand. It was in this singular state that he again made his appearance amongst the solitaries. You may imagine, children, how eagerly every one asked him what he meant by that.

"Alas!" he answered with a sigh, "this sack of sand represents my numberless sins and transgressions, but I take care to carry them behind my back, so as not to see them; this basket, on the contrary, which contains only a little sand, represents the faults of others, which I have before my eyes to judge and condemn them.

Would it not be better for me to carry my sins before me to bewail them, and pray to God to forgive them, than to meddle with those of others?" This discourse, so ingenious and so true, touched the solitaries; they not only

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ceased to speak of the faults of others, but agreed that it was only by acting so, that salvation could be attained.

- PERE MARIN, *Vies des Peres des Deserts.* (*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*)

365. *Inscription in a Dining-Room.* -

There are sins that are horrifying in themselves, such as robbery, murder, and drunkenness. Detraction is not of this number, my very dear friends: people give way to it almost without thinking; it seems even that a conversation is dull and insipid, if it be not seasoned with the salt of detraction. Impressed with this conviction, St. Augustine conceived the idea of placing in the dining-room of his episcopal palace, at Hippo, an inscription against detractors. It consisted of two Latin verses, which I do not now remember, and you would not understand them if I did, but their meaning in English was this:

*No admission here for slanderers
Whose guilty tongue
Tears the reputation of the absent!
At this table nought is permitted
Save innocent discourse.*

This inscription was not unnecessary, dear friends, even at the table of a Saint; for, one day, some bishops, whom St. Augustine had invited to dine, forgot themselves a little in the heat of conversation. They dropped, as it were inadvertently, some rather uncharitable words concerning an absent person. Then the holy bishop of Hippo, assuming a serious tone, said, pointing to the Latin inscription: "Beware, brethren, of speaking ill of others, or I shall be

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under the necessity of having those lines effaced."

These few words sufficed to put a stop to the detraction, and convinced St. Augustine that he had acted wisely in providing against such contingencies.

- POSSIDIUS, *Life of St. Augustine.*

366. *A Sermon in Four Lines.* -

Slander is such a vile thing, dear friends, that saints, good Christians, and even men partially educated, cannot endure it. It is related of St. Thomas of Villanova, 'preacher in ordinary' at the Court of the Emperor Charles V., who was also King of Spain, that he could not bear to hear any one spoken ill of in his presence. He was one day waiting in the Emperor's ante-chamber, in the palace of Madrid, and there were there many other persons waiting to be ushered into the royal apartments. To pass the time, these courtiers amused themselves with jesting about an absent person, commenting on his little failings and peculiarities. Indignant at this conduct, St. Thomas of Villanova goes in amongst them, and says with that tone of authority befitting a sacred orator:

"Gentlemen, you must either desist from speaking of that person in such a way,
or I shall be obliged to withdraw,
and you can yourselves inform the Emperor
of the cause of my leaving without waiting for an audience."

These few words produced all the effect that might have been expected from them; the offenders hung their heads abashed and dared not say another word. Thereupon a nobleman of rank who, in the recess of a window, had seemed to take no notice of what was passing,

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turned round, exclaiming: "Truly, that is what may be called speaking; that sermon is short, but good; it is clear that the preacher is not afraid, even in the palace."

- ABBE DABERT, *Vie de St. Thomas de Villeneuve (Life of St Thomas of Villanova).*

367. *Public Lesson to a Slanderer.* -

Slander is not only a great sin, my dear friends, it is also the meanest of vices, for, if you observe, the detractor always takes advantage of the absence of others to make the odious revelation of their faults. I am sorry I do not know the name of a German bishop who, one day, gave a good lesson to a bad tongue of this kind. It was at table; a person whom the prelate had invited to dine with him took the liberty of making some

ill-natured remarks concerning an absent person. He unhappily did it neither from ignorance nor from want of thought, for he pretended to excuse himself by saying: "I only speak of this because it is true, I invent nothing." The bishop could not well tell him plainly - "Be silent; say no more of that." But he devised a singular way of making him be silent. "John," said he aloud to one of his servants, "go quickly and ask Mr. *Such-a-one*, who resides at *such a number in such a street*, to come hither; I have something to communicate to him. When the detractor found that the very gentleman of whom he had been speaking so ill was being sent for, he blushed to the very temples, stammered at some words, and asked the bishop if he could not have him brought at another time. "On the

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contrary," said the prelate calmly but with the slightest possible tinge of irony, "I prefer to have him come just now, when he is being spoken of, so that he may answer for himself; it seems to me that it would not be fair to attack him without furnishing him with the means of defending himself." Never was man more crest-fallen than our unlucky tattler; he asked pardon for having been so indiscreet, and hastened to quit the company he had scandalized by his slanderous discourse.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 434.

368. *The Ill-Tongued Fruiterer.* -

You can have no idea, children, of the incalculable mischief that may be caused by a bad tongue, telling everything that the person knows, and inventing what he does not know. The most curious and the most awful story of this kind I ever read is the following, which occurred, I believe, in a province of Austria. A village of about five hundred souls had long enjoyed the most perfect peace and tranquillity. All at once, things changed in a most extraordinary manner; hatred, dissension, and heart-burnings suddenly sprang up in almost every family. Neighbour cursed neighbour; one family was in contention with several others; the very children, animated by the example of their parents, quarrelled amongst themselves and abused each other unmercifully. The venerable pastor of this parish, accustomed to see it edifying and Christian, could not believe his eyes. He long sought, to ascertain the cause of a change so sudden

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and so strange, but no cause could he find. But at last, by observation and continual inquiries, he discovered that all the evil had commenced in the tattling and gossiping of a certain fruit-vendor, who had come to reside in the village, and had left it about a year before. In fact, this wretch seemed to have been raised up by the devil to disturb the whole country, so admirably did he play his part. He introduced himself into houses, into families, into companies, heard all that was said, and afterwards went and retailed it underhand to those whom it concerned. "You do not know what was said of you in such a house? I dare not tell you, - it would bring my name in question, and I do not like to meddle with other people's business; if I tell you, mind you do not tell who told you, - if you do, it will ruin me. One could not imagine that people were so wicked. You may be sure I gave no heed to what was said because I knew you were honest, decent people, but the world believes all that's said. . . . Once more, be sure you do not tell that it was I who told you." You may imagine, children, that the more reserve he effected, the more anxious the others were to know what had been said of them. Then the slanderer related things with his usual malice, adding reflections, suppositions, etc., etc. This diabolical system was kept up for several months, now on one side, now on another, so that in a little time the demon of hatred and envy reigned in many hearts. This wretch left the village, but the discord he had sown there did

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not cease at his departure; on the contrary, it passed from neighbour to neighbour, and gained ground from day to day. Things were in this way when the pastor succeeded in finding the clue to this scandalous affair. One Sunday after Vespers, he assembles all the heads of families at his house and addressees them on the existing state of affairs. He begins by reminding them of the sweet tranquillity that reigned amongst them a year or two before; how happy they were then, when the five hundred inhabitants of the village made, as it were, but one family. Then, raising his voice, he asked if they knew whence the change had come. "No one answers," said he; "well! I am going to tell you. It was only an evil spirit who could have done that, and that

evil spirit is *such-a-one*, the fruit-seller who lived here some months of the past year." All those present opened their eyes very wide, as yet at a loss to understand the meaning of their pastor's words. He gave them some explanations, questioned them as to the origin of all the trouble, and made them confess that the fruiterer had been the first to spread these reports, whether true or false. They soon saw it all clearly. But that was not all; the priest knew that this wicked man was just in the village that very day; he sent for him. The man never suspected what he was wanted for; on the contrary, he supposed it was a compliment the pastor was paying him, asking him to go and see him. But he was soon undeceived. He had scarcely set foot in the room, when immediately

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all the villagers assailed him with questions:

- "When was it that you heard me speak ill of my neighbour here?"
- "Who told you that I stole hay from Mathurin's barn?"
- "Where did you see me quarrelling with my brother-in-law?"
- "You may thank the company you are in now, or I would give you what you deserve for telling lies of me to my uncle and cousins."

To all these questions, intermingled with threats, and accompanied by vehement gestures, the poor fruit-vendor knew not what to answer; he stammered out some excuses and strove to justify himself. They told him to hold his tongue, and began to consider what punishment they should inflict upon him. You should have seen them in their honest indignation; some were for branding him on the face with a red-hot iron; others, for beating him well with sticks; others again, for keeping him in prison all his life. But the pastor soon put a stop to these uncharitable propositions: "My friends," said he, "when there is no one to spread reports, or carry stories, quarrels will soon cease. Follow this advice, for you are not allowed to return evil for evil; one thing only you can do, and that is to expel from amongst you this man who has shown himself unworthy of the hospitality you gave him." It was done accordingly; the fruit-vendor quitted the village within twenty-four hours, and took good care, more-over, never to set foot in it again.

- SCHMID et BELET, *Cat. Hist.*, II., 442.