

copy it out in a very legible yet carefully disguised hand, and make arrangements for having it posted at a distance from the place where it was written? Such things are constantly done. At this minute there are a certain number of men and women in the world who are vile enough to do all that simply in order to spoil the happiness of some person whom they regard with "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness." I see in my mind's eye the *gentleman*—the man having all the apparent delicacy and refinement of a gentleman—who is writing a letter intended to blast the character of an acquaintance. Perhaps he meets that acquaintance in society, and shakes hands with him, and pretends to take an interest in his health. Meanwhile he secretly reflects upon the particular sort of calumny that will have the greatest degree of verisimilitude. Everything depends upon his talent in devising the most credible sort of calumny—not the calumny most likely to meet general credence—but that which is most likely to be believed by the person to whom it is addressed, and most likely to do injury when believed. The anonymous calumniator has the immense advantage on his side that most people are prone to believe evil, and that good people are unfortunately the most prone, as they hate evil so intensely that even the very phantom of it arouses their anger, and they too frequently do not stop to inquire whether it is a phantom or a reality. The clever calumniator is careful not to go too far; he will advance something that might be or that might have been; he does not love *le vrai*, but he is a careful student of *le vraisemblable*. He will assume an appearance of reluctance; he will drop hints more terrible than assertions, because they are vague, mysterious, disquieting. When he thinks he has done enough he stops in time; he has inoculated the drops of poison, and can wait till it takes effect.—*Hammerton*.

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WHATEVER you dislike in another person take care to correct in yourself by the gentle reproof.—*Sprat*.