said he, “have you got abroad again? I heard the linnet in the pear tree say you were caught stealing corn, and hung up as a spectacle, but I thought this could not be true; besides, the blackbird in the cherry tree told me that the reason we did not see you as usual was that you were rearing a family, to whom, he said, you were so severe that the poor little creatures had no comfort of their lives.”

“Whatever you may have heard, or whatever you may say, is a matter of indifference to me,” replied the redbreast; but, as a neighbour, I cannot help advising you to restrain your tongue a little, and consider, before you communicate your intelligence, whether what you are going to say has a tendency to disturb the peace of society.”

Whilst he was thus advising him, a flock of birds assembled about the tree; it consisted of those to whom the chaffinch had been chattering, who, having come to an explanation with each other, had detected his falsities, and determined to expel him from the orchard, which they did with every mark of contempt and ignominy. All the redbreasts joined in the pursuit, for even the little ones saw his character in a detestable light, and formed a determination to avoid his fault. When the tell-tale was gone, the party which pursued him alighted altogether in the same