

1: Florence Sackville, or Self-Dependence

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From Henry VI Part 2 What I said was not to lay a law upon me, but only a bare promise, that I would bite my tongue, whenever I censured anything; and now-a-days such things are not so strictly observed as formerly; for today a law is made, and tomorrow it is broken, because perhaps it suits not with our conveniency to keep it; and in on moment we promise to amend our faults, and the next fall into greater; it is one thing to commend good laws and regulations, and another to submit ourselves to them; in a word, saying and doing are two things; let the devil bite himself if he will, for me, for I am not such a fool as to bite my own self, nor practice things upon a mat, where there is no one sees me, who may applaud my heroic actions. I find by this, Bergansa, that if you were a man, you would be a hypocrite, and that all your deeds would be only in outward appearance, done in the eyes of the world, and covered with the cloak of virtue, that you might gain the praise of good men, as in general all hypocrites endeavor to do. I know not what I should do then, I am only sensible what I shall do now, which is, that I will not bite my tongue, having so many things to say, that I know not how nor when I shall be able to finish them; and more so, seeing I am afraid, left at the break of day our speech should be taken from us again, and then we must remain in the dark, as to all these things. Here is a sentence from a translation of that book: This example, from Susanna Moodie, Geoffrey Moncton: I could have bitten my tongue off for my want of tact, but the blunder was out, and she answered with some asperity. And from a collection of old ballads, we have " The Spanish Tragedy; containing the lamentable murder of Horatio and Bellimperia: As for the question of when someone first invited someone else to "Bite your tongue," here is the last quatrain of a poem anachronistically titled "The Telegraph Inverted" from John Lauderdale, A Collection of Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect To gnaw their tongues] To take most grievously the fall of their pomp, dignity, and authority ; also furiously, for extreme sorrow, to bite their own tongues. And they gnawed their tongues for sorrow. Some do expound this, of renouncing their own proud words and writings, But the former signification is better. To be in great agony, like those that bite their tongues for grief and anger, ready at the next increase of pain to devour or destroy themselves. Or, it may be meant, They shall eat their words and be ashamed of their railings upon Gods Saints, though they leave not their Idolatry, vers. The Duke of York is the speaker of those lines. He would not be persuaded, but that a common spectacle-glass was as good an eye-glass for a thirty-six feet glass as the best in the world, and pretended to see better than all the rest, by holding his spectacle in his hand, which shook as fast one way as his head did the other, which I confess made me bite my tongue. Burbury, Florence Sackville; or, Self-Dependence Telling grievances never does any good, but almost always a great deal of harm. If you know anything ill of a man or his wife, keep it to yourself Or if you think you must tell it, bite your tongue hard for half an hour before you indulge your talking propensities. From William Congreve, Love for Love I never heard so insolent a Piece of Vanityâ€”Fie, Mr. What shall I do, what Steps take, if all this be designing!

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