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## XII.24 On anonymous letters

- The Spirit of Law - Book XII. On laws that constitute political liberty in its relation to the citizen -

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The Tartars are required to put their name on their arrows, so it will be known whose hand dispatched them. When Philip of Macedonia was wounded during the siege of a city, they found on the javelin : "Astor inflicted this mortal blow on Philip." [1] If those who accuse a man did so in view of the public good, they would not accuse him before the prince, who can easily be biased, but before the magistrates, who have rules that are formidable only to false accusers. For if they do not want to leave the laws between themselves and the accused, that is evidence that they have reason to fear them ; and the least punishment one can impose on them is not to believe them. No attention can be paid to them except in cases that cannot suffer the slow pace of ordinary justice, and where the prince's safety is at stake. Then we can believe that the accuser has made an effort which has loosened his tongue and made him speak. But in other cases we must say with the emperor Constantius, "We can hardly suspect a man who has had no accuser, though he was not wanting for enemies." [2]

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[1] Plutarque, *Moralia*, *Greek and Roman Parallel Stories*, vol. II, p. 487.

[2] Law VI, Cod. *Theodosianus de famosis libellis*.