

Have I not availed myself of what I heard in confession to induce my penitents to commit sin?

I would run a great risk of being treated with the utmost contempt, should I dare to put to your priests such a question. You would very likely call me a scoundrel for daring to question the honesty and purity of such holy men. You would perhaps go as far as to contend that it is utterly impossible for them to be guilty of such sins as are alluded to in the above question; that never such shameful deeds have been perpetrated through confession. And you would, maybe, emphatically deny that your confessor has ever said or done anything that might lead you to sin or even commit any breach of propriety or modesty. You feel perfectly safe on that score, and see no danger to apprehend.

Let me tell you, good ladies, that you are altogether too confident and in the most fatal delusion. Your own church, through the merciful and warning voice of God speaking to the conscience of your own theologians, tells you that there is a real and eminent danger where you fancy yourself in perfect security. You may never have suspected the danger, but it is there, within the walls of the confessional; nay, more, it is lurking in your very hearts and that of your confessor. He may hitherto have refrained from temptations; he may, at least, have kept within the proper limits of outward morality or decency. But nothing warrants you that he may not be tempted; and nothing could shield you from his attempts on your virtue should he give way to temptation; as cases are not wanting to prove the truth of my assertion. You are sadly mistaken, in a false and dangerous security. You are perhaps, although unawares, on the very brink of a precipice, where so many have fallen through their