

necessity of speaking to an unmarried man on certain things, on which the most common laws of decency ought to have for ever sealed their lips, had almost killed them! Not hundreds, but thousands of times I have heard from the dying lips of single girls, as well as of married women, the awful words: "I am for ever lost! All my past confessions and communions have been as many sacrileges! I have never dared to answer correctly the questions of my confessors! Shame has sealed my lips and damned my soul!"

How many times I remained as one petrified by the side of a corpse when, these last words having hardly escaped the lips of one of my female penitents, she was snatched out of my reach by the merciless hand of death, before I could give her pardon through the deceitful sacramental absolution! I then believed, as the dead sinner herself believed, that she could not be forgiven except by that absolution.

For there are not only thousands, but millions, of Roman Catholic girls and women whose keen sense of modesty and womanly dignity are above all the sophisms and diabolical machinations of their priests. They never can be persuaded to answer "Yes" to certain questions of their confessors. They would prefer to be thrown into the flames, and burnt to ashes with the Brahmin widows, rather than to allow the eyes of a man to pry into the sacred sanctuary of their souls. Though sometimes guilty before God, and under the impression that their sins will never be forgiven if not confessed, the laws of decency are stronger in their hearts than the laws of their cruel and perfidious Church. No consideration, not even the fear of eternal damnation, can persuade them to declare to a sinful man sins which