

As a charitable man, you actually believe that the priests do no ill in the confessional; as a philosopher, you might easily have satisfied yourself that they can scarcely do any. This position is easily proved. In page 88 of your interesting little work, you tell us that, while at St. Malo, you witnessed the ceremony of a "first communion."—"There were" you say, "upwards of 500 young people present on the occasion, of which fully two thirds were girls." Now, these two thirds of the whole number, or say 300 girls must, by way of preparation for the first communion which you saw have been each at confession at least two or three times, probably much oftener. If, therefore, the confessional be so very bad a thing, and a thing so dangerous as you imagine, would the fathers and mothers—the uncles and aunts—the elder brothers and sisters of these girls have allowed them to approach its slippery steps? All of them must at one time have made their first communion, like the young folk whom you beheld with much edification;—all of them must, then, and perhaps many a time since, have been at confession. The dangers of the confessional, if any really existed, must have been long familiar to them. In that case, do you think they would have allowed these innocent little ones to rush into such imminent danger?—Would a tender mother send her spotless child to the foul place you take the confessional to be, if experience had taught her to judge of it as you do? No, Sir; anything half so atrocious could not be. But, the fact is, the confessional is every where a school of virtue. Every mother in France knows it to be such—every mother in France knows it to be such for herself, and hence, when training her daughters to walk in virtue's path, she sends them to seek instruction where, in her youth, she found it herself,—on the "dangerous steps" of the confessional. Then, in the fathers, mothers, and other relatives of the 300 girls whom you saw around the altar at St. Malo, you have so many witnesses to the perfect harmlessness, or to speak more correctly, to the utility and morality of the much slandered confessional. Were the confessional half so injurious to society as many Protestants imagine, it would be held in greater horror than the guillotine itself,—or like our Scottish cutty-stool;—it would long ago have been laughed out of fashion.

We have, however, another, and a still more tangible proof of the salutary effects of the institution in question. It is to be found in the superior morality of those who frequent the confessional. I have no hesitation in saying, that as a general rule, the fair sex is more virtuous and pure in Catholic than in Protestant countries. L. Marouiti, who is no lover of Catholicism, nobly vindicated, not long ago, in a London monthly paper, the much traduced ladies of Italy. Sir Humphrey Davy declared the Catholic peasantry of Tyrol to be more virtuous, in

every way, than their Swiss or German neighbours. The morality of Irish females is proverbial; and not many sessions back, it was lauded by Lord Normanby in the House of Lords, and in the Commons by Lord Morpeth. I am loth to speak disparagingly of my countrywomen, but this I must say, that, albeit they do not tread on the "dangerous steps" of the confessional, were covenanting discipline still in force many of them would be no strangers to a certain piece of Church furniture so formidable to their grandmother. A sample of the laxity of morals, even among the higher classes so prevalent in England, may be found in the February number of Colburn's "New Monthly." An author in that periodical, who styles himself "an old diplomatist," and who writes the "Secret History of the Court, Ministry and times of George IV," says, "it may not be amiss to tell you that jealousy's rankling tooth hurts not the Hon. G. W.; he amuses himself with a little *figurante* from the opera whilst his wife regularly attends her devotions at—House, when the gallant marquis is in town, and his wife either at toilet or in bed. Conjugal infidelity, in the middle ranks, though fraught with uneasiness, to the fashionable world is considered a mere *trifle of ton*. *It gives a spirit to, and diffuses a brilliancy around a character.*"

Rampant as vice is among ourselves in Britain, things are much worse in this respect in the purely Protestant countries of the north of Europe.

It is to Germany and the kingdom of Sweden, that I can safely refer you to the most lamentable samples of female delinquency. Look, for instance at the state of morals in this last mentioned country where Catholicism is not so much as tolerated. Pagan Greece or Rome could scarcely furnish a parallel to the almost incredible degradation of the human form divine in that anti-papish land. Our countryman, that honest traveller, Mr. S. Laing, will tell you this better than I can do. I will immediately lay before you the words of this candid writer: but, first, you will be kind enough to observe, that the clergy of Sweden is a married clergy, numerous, wealthy, and influential. They are said to be men of much education, and in things spiritual they are lords and masters from one end of the kingdom to the other. They do not, however, require their people to go to confession; and, if immorality prevails among them to a most lamentable amount, this must be owing to something else than those "dangerous steps" which, in southern Europe leads to the confessional. Mr. Laing, on minute enquiry, finds that in Sweden the number of illegitimate births is proportionately greater than in France or England. Stockholm is beyond comparison more depraved than Paris or England. In Paris only one out of five births is illegitimate, while in Stockholm one child of every one-and a