

DANGER ATTENDING THE SOLITARY EXAMINATION OF FEMALE PATIENTS.

THIS is a subject which will doubtless be novel to the reader, and he will be lost in doubt wherein this danger consists. True it may be, and to every pure-minded man unquestionably is, a sunken rock. Lest, however, he should at any time be recked thereon, we will lay before him the following account, which we take from the *London Medico-Chirurgical Review* for the last month.

“ It appears that a young woman, *æ*t. 21, who had been in a bad state of health for two years, applied to Dr. Baird, physician to the Liverpool Infirmary, and, as we are informed, a practitioner of twenty years' standing, in the early part of last March. She was then suffering from debility, dyspnœa, constant thirst, occasional severe headaches, painful and irregular menstruation, frequent desire to make water, the legs and feet œdematous and painful, the veins of the right leg slightly varicose, and pains in the hip and thigh. Active remedies were several times prescribed, but no material benefit was obtained. About the end of March, she first showed the Doctor her heel, on which was a piece of thickened cuticle, resembling a corn. At the next visit the thigh having become swollen, in addition to the former symptoms, Dr. Baird proposed a private examination, to which the girl consented. The inguinal glands were found enlarged, but no uterine disease was discovered. At the present time the patient is nearly restored to health, after a continued course of alterative medicines, with digitalis, squills, and quinine.

Such is the statement of the case furnished by Dr. Baird. But this was not all. The girl, it would appear, related the circumstance of the examination to one of those elderly females who are found in or about

most communities, and who generally prove a great blessing or a great curse to the generation of doctors. In the present instance, the veteran spinster excited some little hubbub, and the family complained of the indecency of the proceeding.

A gentleman, a reverend one, getting scent of this, complained to the Committee of the Liverpool Infirmary of the atrocious conduct of its physician, in examining the young woman. A junto of three, of which the reverend accuser was one, was delegated to inquire into the affair, and this impartial and well-qualified tribunal would seem to have "pronounced definitively against their officer," and even requested him to resign.

We will not stop to comment on the absurdity of much of the proceeding. The patient was not an infirmary patient, and, consequently, the case was not one for the jurisdiction of the reverend bench. If a man is condemned by the laws of his country for crime, or for any serious moral offence, the governors of an institution to which he may belong, are justified in taking steps to remove from among them one so unfitted for an honorable station. But that the rumor of a private faux pas, the mere suspicion of something wrong, should justify a public board in proceeding to hold a court martial on an officer of the establishment, is a measure so unjust, so inquisitorial, so monstrous in every point of view, that all of right feeling must turn from it with disgust. All who know the nature of medical reputation are aware that, to breathe on it the breath of suspicion, is often to taint it irremediably. The prejudices of mankind are concerned, and with prejudices it is vain to reason. What, then, must be the responsibility of those who could lightly lacerate the feelings, and perchance blast the fortunes, of a medical man, in subjecting him to an inquest of such a character on such an occasion! We do not envy them, and least of all that clerical inquisitor, at once the accuser and the judge.

Bad as the business is, it is calculated to teach an useful lesson. A female should never be examined unless another female be present. This precaution should never be overlooked by those who wish to escape the imputation to which Dr. Baird has been subjected."