

THE SPECULUM.—Our attention has been called by a correspondent to the great frequency with which this instrument is used, often needlessly, and, in far too many cases, in young impressionable females, where only absolute necessity should call for such an investigation. It is especially the young members of our profession against whom our correspondent directs his remarks, for he says: "There are rumors and statements going abroad, which deserve attention, that young unmarried girls, not of doubtful character, but strictly virtuous, are often tampered with, so as to allow the introduction of the vaginal speculum. * * * I am told that visitors in the families of these victims of quackery (?) are often invited and urged to see the evidences of disease, real or imaginary. I do not know how a remedy for these evils can best be applied, but there should be no delay in

doing anything possible for this object; and for those guilty of such degradation, language is hardly capable of too severe denunciation."

In these days of poly-speculation, when we seem jumping out of the swaddling clothes which our forefathers left about us, and are disposed to submit each organ of the body to every species of investigation which the fertile brain of man can devise, it would be strange indeed if we did not assume too frequently to throw light on regions where light need not go. Grant that that we need more knowledge of the diseases of woman, as we do of every other branch of disease, and that so many of her ailments are due to pathological conditions of the organs of generation; grant the assertions of those who have come from the schools of Europe in reference to the facilities for observation enjoyed there, and their complaints that the hospitals and dispensaries here do not offer them similar advantages; grant this, and, notwithstanding, we do not hesitate freely to say that vaginal examinations are too frequently and unnecessarily made. The glory of a true woman is that shrinking delicacy of feeling which dreads exposure, in whatever way it may come; her only shame, its loss. She comes to her physician as a confidant to a friend, and every needless exposure serves only to blunt the sensitive nature which is her sex's heritage, an exposure we have no right to ask her to submit to.

Of those who would compare Europe with America in its clinical advantages in this respect, the question might well be asked if, on comparing the mental, moral and social condition of the peasant class, of Austria, for instance, with that of even the lowest class among our own native population, any friend of humanity would, for the sake of instruction, place our own women on the plane of the European.

This is no new subject; it has been thoroughly discussed at various times; but we cannot refrain from expressing the views which we entertain, and which are suggested by our correspondent. So far as may be necessary to ascertain the cause of disease in our patient, so far as may be advisable for the absolute needs of clinical

instruction, is it our privilege to use the speculum, and even then only in such a manner as may preserve those feelings which are the right of woman.

"True clinical teaching like this would meet with full approval from all who wish well to medical education; but to uncover an unfortunate woman in a college amphitheatre in presence of a hundred or more students, is a proceeding the agony of which is not compensated by any adequate advantage to the class."*

We find this ulceration on our professional os so well touched up by our cotemporary, the senior Editor of the Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal, that we cannot help giving a quotation from his remarks, to close the subject.

"Now let us come home and bring to judgment a sin in the family. Within the profession there is a species of quackery which is advertised, not by the printing press, but by the uterine speculum. There prevails very extensively among our women a singular disorder, of which the most prominent symptom is a passion for uterine explorations. To some extent medical practitioners are responsible for the general prevalence of this malady. It is easy for sensitive females to persuade themselves that their afflictions, from the toothache downwards, are due to falling of the womb, or ulcerations or tumors; and he is the sharpest doctor who first detects the difficulty. Here comes in the charlatan, to exaggerate the disease, if there be any, and to beguile the patient with promises of cure. Henceforth the speculum becomes to the poor woman an essential part of the daily routine of life. Caustic, the knife, and various manipulations, look like work; and she is charmed with the industrious and energetic attentions of the professional mechanic. By and by the bubble bursts; and for all the good that has been done by subjecting the uterus to a course of torture, its proprietor might as well have adopted the treatment accredited to that miracle of scientific skill, Li-potai, namely, the application of a blister to the crown of the head to raise the fallen womb to its place.

"It is to be hoped that the fashion of women to mistrust and slander their wombs and rejoice in having them explored and tinkered, has passed its culmination; and with it the professional mania for persecut-

ing that organ. The highest authorities have taken the back course and condemned their own uterine surgery in some respects. We may therefore indulge reasonable expectation that the uterus will shortly withdraw from public exposure, and regard the decencies of private life."