

PRUDERY OR POLITICS.

The warden of the Cook County Hospital, a layman who has nearly absolute power in that institution, not long since prohibited bedside clinics, and has now put his veto upon all public gynecologic clinics whatever. The superintendent of the corresponding institution in Milwaukee, Wis., has, it is reported, followed his example and now prohibits clinics or the attendance of medical students at operations on women where any exposure is necessary. This cuts off a very important part of the clinical instruction, and ought certainly to have good reasons to justify it. So far as we have seen, the excuses are that it shocks the sensibilities of the warden, and especially that some medical students have been discourteous in their behavior. As regards the first point it does not probably occur to the official that in this he is setting himself up as a critic of all who have preceded him, and of all the physicians in charge who have not, as a class, been accused by others of not possessing gentlemanly instincts, as is implied by the course he adopts. There need not be anything degrading or necessarily offensive to a modest patient in a gynecologic clinic, and we believe that it is the practice, so far as possible, to respect her feelings and wishes. Foreign observers have remarked on the contrast in this regard between methods here and abroad and have criticised what seemed to them the superfluous delicacy of American surgeons. This answers also the second alleged excuse; if there was improper behavior on the part

1. The Utica (N. Y.) Press, January 22.

of students it should have been checked and the guilty individuals excluded, not necessarily the whole class. It is not necessary to burn a house down to roast a pig. If any of the instructors or surgeons fail to cultivate a proper morale at their clinics they could be admonished, or even excluded, should that extreme measure be required. If they have not, the action taken is a slander by implication. It reflects also upon the discipline maintained and does not suggest the highest type of executive ability on the warden's part. If a man with absolute power in such an institution can not insure proper conduct except by destroying one of its useful functions, it might be well to have someone better qualified take his place. There are those who could permit gynecologic clinics without the suspicion of impropriety. On the whole, the transaction suggests an unacknowledged motive; it appears to be to a large extent a gallery play of a politician to catch the sentimental public. It will fulfill its purpose and then gradually the old order will be resumed. Politically managed hospitals can only reform spasmodically, and even such pseudo reforms will follow the same rule. A judicious restriction of free clinics, not only gynecologic, but generally in all departments of surgery and medicine, would be undoubtedly a good thing for the medical profession, and perhaps not altogether a bad one for the public. Any such wholesale cutting off, however, of the means of instruction in an important specialty is condemnable in every sense of the word.
