

IMMORALITY IN CANADA.

IN the *Medical Record* (Nov. 7, 1896), we find the following editorial :
“ We have been distressed and shocked beyond measure to learn that large and increasing numbers of women in Canada are giving themselves up to the vilest form of immoral practices. The report that comes to us, indeed, is such that, were it credible, we should be led to despair of the future of the country, for, compared to Canada, or at least to Toronto, Sodom and Gomorrah were as pure as Salvation Army shelters. It appears that cycling, which with us is adding so much to the health and the beauty and the charm of our women, is in Canada, or at least in Toronto, merely a means of gratifying unholy and bestial desire. We hesitate to believe such a report, but we have it on the authority of the editor of the *Dominion Medical Monthly*, and he is on the spot and speaks as one with absolute knowledge of the facts.

“ After referring to the advantages claimed for the bicycle, which he refutes by the statement that the average woman gets about all the exercise she wants in looking after her home, our esteemed contemporary says that ‘ the consensus of opinion is increasing overwhelmingly day by day that bicycle riding produces in the female a distinct orgasm . . . and even if an orgasm is not produced the continued erethism is decidedly more injurious and tends to the production of nervous diseases and the general breaking down of the system. The only contention that can be made is that the orgasm or erethism is not produced. This we know to be absolutely untrue.’ The writer adds more of the same kind, and pictures the mothers, wives, and daughters of his neighbors as scorching through the country, stooping low over the handle bars, and ‘ subjected to continued erethism as well as an occasional orgasm.’

“ There is but one of two conclusions to be drawn from this statement. Either the wheelwomen of Toronto are the vilest of their sex, or they are the victims of a contemptible slander. Unless our contemporary has a mass of facts sufficient to establish beyond doubt the sweeping generalization contained in the article from which we have quoted, he has smirched the fair name of his countrywomen in a reckless fashion that calls for the strongest condemnation. The question of the healthfulness of cycling, for men as well as for women, is one that still admits of discussion ; but

the man who can assert or even suggest that the thousands, perhaps millions, of women throughout the world who ride the wheel are giving themselves over to self-abuse puts himself beyond the reach of argument."

The filthy rubbish to which the *Record* refers is in itself essentially nasty, while the direct charges against the women and girls of Toronto are simply infamous. To the *Record* we desire to say that its conclusion that our women are "victims of a contemptible slander" is correct. The impure and immoral women of Toronto do not, as a rule, indulge in cycling. They might misuse the wheel in gratifying their baser passions, but other methods suit them better. The great majority of the profession in Toronto believe that cycling, under ordinary judicious limitations, is in all respects a healthful exercise for women, and quite as free from evil as any form of recreation can possibly be. In many instances our physicians have reached this conclusion after careful study of the subject, and after overcoming rather strong prejudices they had against the wheel in former years. We are surprised and ashamed to find that Toronto contains a physician who is capable of writing such an article as that which appeared in the *Dominion Medical Monthly*.