

THE CANADA LANCET.

**A Monthly Journal of Medical and Surgical Science
Criticism and News.**

Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancet, Toronto."

AGENTS.—DAWSON BROS., Montreal; J. & A. McMILLAN, St. John, N. B.; GEO. STREET & Co., 30 Cornhill, London, Eng.; M. H. MAHLER, 23 Rue Richer, Paris.

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER, 1885.

*The LANCET has the largest circulation of any
Medical Journal in Canada.*

MEDDLESOME MIDWIFERY.

Some of our best thinkers have called a halt in midwifery practice. It is felt that at the present rate of advance we shall soon overtake Nature, and relegate her to a back place. Those of us who have some lingering respect for Nature, and some doubt as to the propriety of converting a physiological function into an automatic movement, regulated only by the skill and boldness of the artist, will be glad to know that protests, more or less pronounced, have been entered in several highly respectable quarters. To be just, it is proper to say, that there have always been a "remnant" who refused to be carried away on the antiseptic wave, and whose confidence in the power and completeness of the natural forces remained unshaken. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that the rank and file, no less than many eminent persons, have been borne along on this most captivating and popular wave. But a little longer and woman would have been declared unfit to deliver herself unaided, or if, perchance she did, to survive the process, unless sealed against noxious germs. But every hobby, and every practice, not well grounded, will have but its day, and so now, judging by what we read, all the fancy obstetricians are beating a hasty retreat. The principal danger now seems to lie in the probability of their being carried as far back by the ebb as they were carried forward by the flow. And thus it ever has been with the

human mind, not only in the domain of medicine, but in all fields difficult or impossible to define with mathematical precision. The theorist and experimentalist is essential to progress, no less in obstetrics than in other departments; but we would all prefer that somebody else's wife or sister should be the subject of all doubtful practices. In the short cycle of our lives many queer things happen us. It now turns out, according to the evidence, that it is quite possible to complete the process of parturition by natural forces alone. Nay, more; that the chances of woman's survival are greatly enhanced by a policy of non-interference.

In the Maternity Hospital, N. Y., out of 570 deliveries the death rate was 2.67 %. A few years afterwards, under "reform," the death rate rose to 6.67 %. Thus in 1881, out of 202 selected cases, 12 died. Of 423 cases, occurring from April, 1881, to April, 1882, but 2 deaths took place from puerperal fever, and the whole mortality was greatly reduced. These last cases were all strictly treated on the non-interference plan. Previous to the adoption of "reform," the death rate was not above the minimum in the N. Y. State Hospital for immigrants. A year since, a so-called "reform" was instituted there; the prophylactic injections and complicated manipulations were introduced, and with the direct and immediate effect of increasing the mortality rate, which became alarmingly high. At the same time, "there were on Ward's Island a large number of Russian Jewish refugees, who were filthy and despondent. Upwards of 90 of these women were delivered without a death. There were numerous forceps deliveries, but there was absolute non-interference in the after-treatment." From other quarters also comes evidence of a similar character. These figures are not probably free from inaccuracies. A mental bias is capable of presenting misleading statistics, even though the intention be honest. One thing, however, can be said in their support, namely, that for the long ages antecedent to fancy midwifery, woman was able to bring forth her young, and, to a remarkable degree, fulfil the Scriptural injunction laid upon her, to "multiply and replenish the earth."

But we would here file a caveat. We would not intentionally discredit the great work accomplished for the relief of woman in the hour of her distress