

ceasing to flow the surgeon should block the end of the instrument with his finger, and so withdraw it that he does not introduce air into the joint. A canula thus used is as safe as an aspirator, and it has this recommendation, that it is sure to be in working order. If an ordinary canula and trocar cannot be used with security, peritoneal cavities, ovarian cysts, and vaginal tunics should have been in the habit of suppurating. This we know is not the case. It is very much the fashion now, however, to drop the simple word "tapping," or its equivalent "paracentesis," and, with a homage to euphemism, to employ the term "aspiration." To the practitioner it matters not whether the fluid is blood or sero-synovia. He has merely to obey the indication. If the joint has begun to swell up directly after the injury, the distending fluid must be blood; but if a day or more have intervened between the hurt and the swelling, the fluid has been poured out by the inflamed synovial membrane. Such fluid is a mixture of synovia with serum; often it is stained with blood. Dr. Owen has never known any trouble to follow the tapping of a joint; he adopts it as a routine treatment in the case of fracture of the patella as well as in the more simple variety of distension. As a rule, the puncture is made to one side of the patella. When withdrawing the canula the track is obliterated by firm pressure with the finger. The skin puncture is covered with a scrap of lint dipped in collodion, or by a little pad of dry wool. The knee, together with the upper half of the leg and the lower half of the thigh, is then enclosed in lateral splints of house-flannel and plaster-of-Paris. The limb is fixed in the extended position, the foot being slightly raised. The firm pressure which is made around the joint is comforting, and it effectually prevents further effusion into the synovial membrane. Having watched the effect of this method of treatment, Dr. Owen can honestly say that, should he have the bad luck to be the subject of acute traumatic hæmarthrosis or sero-synovial effusion of the knee, he would most certainly have the joint treated in the manner described. And he should ask that the site of puncture might be first numbed by the application of a piece of ice and some salt.—*Medical News*.

AMATEUR PRESCRIBING AND ITS RESULTS.—Acid nitrate of mercury is, doubtless, a useful external application in certain cutaneous disorders, but it is hardly the thing to smear over one's body as a cure for scabies. Acting on the advice of an unlearned fellow-laborer, however, three country yokels last week purchased some quicksilver and some nitric acid, and, having mixed the two, anointed their itching skins, with the result that the coroner has had to inquire into the cause of death of two of them, while the third is simply "hanging fire." The chemist who sold the materials came in for some censorious observations, but he does not seem to have infringed even the spirit of the law. Nitric acid is an article in common use in the arts, and quicksilver is not in itself poisonous. Another time, however, perhaps he will take the trouble to inquire what such things are wanted for. Had he done so in this case he would have saved two, if not three, unhappy men from an agonizing death.—*Hospital Gazette*.

THE Canadian Practitioner

A SEMI-MONTHLY REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS
OF THE MEDICAL SCIENCES.

Contributions of various descriptions are invited. We shall be glad to receive from our friends everywhere current medical news of general interest.

When a change of address occurs please promptly notify the Publishers, THE J. E. BRYANT COMPANY (Limited), 58 Bay Street.

TORONTO, MAY 1, 1891.

LICENSING BOARDS IN THE UNITED STATES.

Recent legislation in many of the States is likely to exert great influence in medical education in the near future. It is certainly remarkable that the standard in the United States should so long have remained so low as compared with that of all other civilized countries. A few years ago there was practically no entrance examinations for the great majority of medical students. As the medical schools were the masters of the situation in those times, the