

in our own country. A national examining and licensing board, under whatever name, whose requirements shall be high enough to satisfy the demands of any and every State in the Union, is a thing for which we may devoutly pray.

LIQUID AIR.

A few weeks ago an article on liquid air appeared in one of the magazines, and such extraordinary claims were made in regard to the possibilities and probabilities of this new material that not a few were convinced that the days of steam and electricity were numbered, that a revolution in mechanic and power-producing forces was about to take place. Judging from this article, not only had perpetual motion been invented, but, compared with this new power, all the discoveries of the past would be as mere playthings. While probably future studies, investigations and experiments in the subject of liquid air may prove this to be a *fin de siècle* wonder, the claims made by this writer are too sensational for belief even in this day of progress and discoveries. We know too well how, in medical matters, a little truth no larger than a grain of mustard seed is magnified to the size of a mountain by the sensational writers in the daily press. So also with other scientific matter. And, by the way, too often it happens that the little truth which existed at the beginning is liable to be lost sight of when the bubble of sensationalism is burst by the probe of investigation. While liquid air may prove to be a wonderful thing, it might be well to wait until men of authority in scientific matters tell us so in scientific journals, if we are not able to investigate it for ourselves. Magazine articles on scientific subjects are as rarely to be depended on as are newspaper articles on medical subjects. These comments are called forth from the fact that during the last ten days two papers have been received for publication, each of which was based on the magazine article to which we refer, and in each instance the statements contained in the article were accepted as law and gospel.

SANITARY HYPERLEGISLATION.

It is said that a bill is before the New York Legislature requiring telephone companies to sterilize their instruments, the bill having been inspired by the results of inspection by health officers during the height of the recent influenza epidemic. Undoubtedly such a procedure as is thus called for might be an excellent thing, at least as a psychic therapeutic measure, and may be easily practicable with telephones devoted to public use. To say, however, as a New York physician is quoted as saying, that "a call for central may be a summons for the destroying angel" or that "Schuylkill water is an elixir of life compared with the various mortuary evils which lurk in the innocent looking transmitter," as a Philadelphia newspaper puts it, is certainly a strong statement, and one that, by inference at least, conveys perhaps a very much more alarming impression than the facts actually warrant. If the insignificant dangers that lurk in the telephone receiver justify such utterances,

what must we say of the public drinking cups, the dirty and unchanged seats of public conveyances, the unwashed or imperfectly washed utensils of the cheap restaurants, not to mention public towels, combs, and brushes of hotels and barber shops and a hundred other matters that the unthinking public has been utilizing without care or thought of peril? The fact is there is danger of infection everywhere, but there is also danger of overstating matters and thereby defeating the very purpose of the warnings we wish to give in most cases and creating a morbid mysophobia in a few, neither of which is a desirable result. The education of the public in sanitation, by sensational newspaper statements, is liable to defeat itself by its exaggeration or do genuine harm by overexciting the fears of the credulous. Sterilizing public telephones can do no harm and may relieve some people's minds, and if the New York Legislature chooses to enact such a regulation, we need not object. If, however, it should fail to do so, the public may still trust in Providence and bear in mind that numerous as are the perils between the cradle and the grave, as the Irishman said, we still daily perform the miracle of surviving them.

THE VITA PROPRIA OF CELLS.

The vitality which belongs to the individual cell has been designated by VIRCHOW as the *vita propria* of the cell. This characteristic of the cell has been studied but little. Studying inflammation of the cornea, GRAWITZ observed that certain injuries, which usually destroyed all cell life, did not seem to have any effect upon the cells of the cornea. Thus, drying of the cornea for eleven days did not kill the corneal corpuscles. BUSSE observed that ciliated epithelium from nasal polypi may preserve the movements of its cilia for eighteen days after having been separated from its matrix. Spermatozoa have been found to maintain their movement for a long time after death of the animal or after their separation from the living organism. SCHADE observed distinct movement eleven days after the spermatozoa had been removed from the testicle of the guinea-pig. The nearer the freezing-point of the temperature in which the spermatozoa were kept, the longer the duration of their movement. This persistence of the life of spermatozoa may be of medicolegal importance. In the rectum of a boy who had been murdered, living spermatozoa were found eight days after death, the body having remained in water at a temperature which varied between 3 degrees above and 3 degrees below zero C. The murderer subsequently confessed that he had used the body of the boy to satisfy unnatural sexual desire. WENTSCHER found that bits of skin, kept in a sterile salt solution, may maintain the vitality of some of the cells for as long as twenty-two days. Similar results have been obtained by SCHNITZLER and EWALD and LJUNGGREN. GROHE¹ has investigated the *vita propria* of the cells of the periosteum. The pieces were taken from rabbits and kept at a temperature of between zero C and 4 degrees above. The pieces were then transplanted, at various inter-

¹ Virchow's Archiv., Bd. 155, 1899.