

## SCIENCE:

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THE PRACTICE which has existed in the State of New York since 1864 of confining insane persons charged with crime at the Auburn State Asylum for Insane Criminals has seemed to many to be in need of revision. Senator Pierce has introduced into the Legislature a bill to discontinue the practice. In addition to this measure, others affecting the lunacy laws are before the Legislature for its consideration. One of these provides for the appointment of six commissioners to revise all the laws of the State relating to lunacy; another, if passed, will substitute a commission for the one existing commissioner; still another measure provides for the care of the dependent insane in State rather than, as is now the practice, in county institutions. This latter bill seems to us to be by far the most important of all those which have been introduced during the present year. Under this law the State will be divided into districts by a board, to be constituted of the president of the State Board of Charities, the State commissioner in lunacy, and the State comptroller. After this board shall have established the insane districts, they are to file with the secretary of state the boundaries of the same, and the number of pauper insane people within each. In each of these districts suitable buildings and accommodations are required to be erected, either on new sites or on the site of some asylum already in existence. To these asylums, indigent and pauper insane are required to be sent for maintenance, instead of

being retained in county asylums. There are sixty counties in the State, and as many insane-asylums. Under the proposed law, this number would be reduced to ten. It would be possible to establish a uniform system of treatment in institutions managed by a State board, which it would be next to impossible to effect under the county system. The proposed plan would put a stop to the abuses which are believed to exist in some of the present institutions, and is, for this and many other reasons, supported by the medical profession and laymen who are familiar with the disadvantages of the present system.

RECENTLY SOME NEW PROJECTS of polar explorations have been made. Since the failure of the British Government to support the scheme of the Australian colonies, little has been done regarding the proposed Antarctic expedition. At present, according to the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, a scheme is on foot for the furtherance of Antarctic exploration by private enterprise. A New Zealand colonist (a Norwegian) has gone to Europe for the purpose of taking out with him a number of Norwegians who have been accustomed to fishing. In one or two steamers, the gentleman referred to intends to send out these Norwegians, under proper command, accompanied by one or more scientific men, with suitable equipment, for the purpose of exploring the Antarctic region, with the ultimate object of establishing a whale-fishery on an extensive scale. If at all practicable, a party will be left during a whole year on Victoria Land, or other suitable place, in order that the conditions of the region may be thoroughly investigated.

On the other hand, various plans of continuing Arctic researches are on foot. It is stated that a movement has been started in Norway for the despatch, in the summer of 1890, of an expedition which will try to reach the north pole; and it is proposed to offer the leadership to Dr. Nansen, who will probably return from Greenland in a few weeks. The intention is that an attempt should be made to reach the pole by way of Franz-Josef Land, — a route which is advocated by some of the most competent authorities on Arctic explorations. *Ski*, which have played so prominent a part in the Nordenskiöld and Nansen Greenland expeditions, would no doubt again prove of service. The Geographical Society of Bremen is about to send out an exploring expedition to the Spitzbergen Sea, the main object being inquiries into the zoölogy of this region. The scientists of this expedition will be Dr. W. Kükenthal, the well-known zoölogist, and Dr. A. Walter. The party will start from northern Norway.

THE WOMEN'S ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA.<sup>1</sup>

ON June 8, 1885, ten intellectual women of Washington met to form a scientific society. The idea was a novel one and hazardous, in that only one of the participants had ever done scientific work; to wit, Mrs. Tilly E. Stevenson. In her mind the plan of a woman's anthropological society was conceived; and to her energy, ability, and fostering care are due its birth and larger growth.

At the time of organization the objects of the society were stated to be, "first, to open to women new fields for systematic investigation; second, to invite their co-operation in the development of the science of anthropology." The present constitution declares that "the object of this society shall be to promote anthropology by encouraging its study and facilitating the interchange of thought among those interested in anthropologic research, and by arranging and preserving systematically all information relating to it, and also by holding regular meetings for its discussion."

It is often asked why there should be two anthropological societies in Washington. Speaking for ourselves, we have no desire to

<sup>1</sup> General report of the recording secretary, Mrs. Anita Newcomb McGee, read before the society at Washington, D.C., Feb. 25, 1889.