attendance of three months in the practice of a recognised asylum should be accepted in place of three months' attendance on hospital practice. We rejoice, therefore, to see that Dr. Rumsey's strenuous and persevering labours have now been successful in bringing the whole subject of state medicine so prominently into notice that there appears some *likelihood* of effective action being taken in the way of a very much needed reform.

Female Nursing in Asylums.

Why should female nursing be banished entirely, as it almost always is, from the male wards of our lunatic asylums? Is it a practice founded on valid reasons, and in harmony with the humane spirit of the modern method of treating insanity, or is it really a relic of the old and barbarous system under which the insane were cut off from all human sympathy, and dealt with as savage creatures outlawed from all human rights, and not amenable to any but the harshest treatment? These questions are now being asked; and that they are so, may be taken as evidence of the continuous progress of the humane and enlightened spirit which has all but abolished the means of mechanical restraint in the treatment of insanity. In the second edition of his work on the "Physiology and Pathology of Mind," Dr. Maudsley writes:—

"It may well be questioned whether the practice of banishing all female nursing from the male department of an asylum, and of leaving the patients entirely to the care of men, is not prejudicial. An elderly female nurse, of a kind and sensible disposition, could not fail to be a great comfort to those of the patients who require gentle and sympathetic attention, and might be expected often to exert a very beneficial influence over them. Assuredly some would yield to woman's persuasion more readily and with less feeling of humiliation than to the dictates of an attendant of their own sex."

Similar ideas are expressed more fully in the last report of the West Riding Asylum, by Dr. Crichton Browne, who has, moreover, tried the practice of introducing a female nurse into the male wards, with a successful result exceeding his anticipations. We quote the whole of Dr. Browne's remarks on this subject:—

"How to provide suitable and trustworthy attendants is certainly the great problem of the day in the management of our lunatic asylums,

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and anything which may assist even in its partial solution, is deserving of consideration. Such an auxiliary seems to be found in the appointment of female nurses to male wards, an arrangement which tends to inspire the male attendants with gentleness and self-command, and confers great benefits upon the patients. One such appointment has taken place here during last year. A female nurse, the wife of an attendant, was placed, in April, in one of the largest male wards, containing 70 epileptic and suicidal patients. Her presence in the midst of these lunatics, many of whom are of impulsive or depraved character, has been productive of the most excellent and pleasing effects, which have transcended even the sanguine anticipations that led to her appointment. The ward has become quieter and more orderly under her influence, and a marked change for the better has taken place in the personal neatness and general deportment of the patients. A singular power of self-control seems to have been awakened in them, so that they are enabled to suppress those outbursts of violence, that abusive language, and those offensive habits, to which they used formerly to give way. Their whole nature seems to have been softened, and their tone of feeling ameliorated, by the simple expedient of introducing a kind-hearted female amongst them.

"It is in the male sick wards, however, that female nurses will be found most useful. There they may prove invaluable; for it is open to doubt whether the high mortality which prevails amongst male lunatics, which is about one-third greater than that which obtains amongst females similarly afflicted, may not be *in some slight degree* due to defective nursing—to the absence of those sick-room comforts and attentions which women alone are capable of offering. No one can visit an asylum without being struck by the difference which exists between the male and female infirmaries. They may be alike in structure, furniture and arrangement, and yet they are widely different. An air of wholesome cleanliness and hopeful solicitude pervades the one, which has no parallel in the dismal precision or dreary apathy of the other. And no one but the initiated can know how much hangs upon the most trivial details of nursing, how much art may be expended in the mere smoothing of a pillow, and how often the issues of life and death are decided by the watchfulness or neglect of those who minister at the bed side. It is not too much to say that life is often prolonged, nay, saved, by a little intelligent care, and that it is often cut short by the want of that care at a critical moment. By far the greatest number of deaths takes place not, as might have been expected, at those hours when vital power is lowest, but at those when vigilance is most relaxed—when nursing is at its minimum. Seeing that this is so, that good nursing is of paramount importance, and that good nursing is not to be obtained from blunt, unsympathising men, however well disposed they may be, it follows as an inevitable corollary that female nurses should be added to our sick wards whenever it is practicable to do so. With the approval of your committee,

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this arrangement will be carried out here as soon as a fitting opportunity presents itself."

We have met with similar remarks in some other asylum report, but regret that, having mislaid it, we cannot now refer to the passage bearing upon this important point. Now, however, that the question of female nursing of male patients in asylums has been definitely raised, and the practice actually tried on a small scale, we may look to have, before long, further information respecting the effects of its employment.

The Texas State Lunatic Asylum.

Most people are aware that Texas is not a very settled country, nor one in which a man of quiet disposition would choose to reside. Perhaps a story which we heard a few days since conveys as vivid a picture of the unsettled state of the country as it is possible to convey in a few words. An American gentleman being asked his opinion of Texas, replied, after a short pause of deliberation, and with the characteristic drawl and nasal twang, "Well, sir, if I owned Hell and Texas, I should let Texas, and elect to live on my other property." An opinion sufficiently expressive of the amenities of Texas. We have been reminded of the story by a letter in the *Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal*, giving a brief account of a visit to the State Lunatic Asylum of Texas. The writer, who gives no name, says that he found in the hall "what the doctor called a case-bed, but which looked more like a cage for wild animals. It was a box, a little wider and longer than a single bedstead, made of wooden bars, much resembling a wooden cradle without rockers, about a foot from the ground, on which a mattress and chamber were placed. The patient lies down, and a lid, composed likewise of wooden rods, two or three inches apart, is secured over him, about a half foot above his body, rendering it impossible for him to raise his head or roll around in it. It was, without exception, the most cruel contrivance I have ever witnessed for bodily torture, and to my great surprise, I found that three were in nightly use. A patient whom I saw in the office, apparently harmless, suffering from chronic mania following its acute stage, the result of onanism, was one of its unhappy inmates. The poor doctor, in my opinion, was as fit a subject for such treatment as his unfortunate patient."

After giving a few other details with regard to the establishment, which certainly appear to indicate a better condition of things than the description of the cage would lead

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