the town in a proper sanitary condition. So conscious does it seem of its deficiencies in this respect, that even where no public expenditure would be involved, the saving of a few pounds to some private owner of property is often thought of more importance than the preservation of the public health. Dead wells are tolerated, sometimes in close proximity to water wells, simply because the tenants themselves will not "complain." Even where the Corporation officials rouse themselves to action and compel an owner of property to provide his cottages with new sanitary appliances, it is not an unknown thing for them to tolerate the erection of one water closet for two houses. This slackness is not to be wondered at when it is remembered that the occupiers of these houses will be forthwith fined by having in future to pay for the removal of their own refuse. It is an excellent thing to provide proper means of isolation, and for this the Corporation deserves credit, but it is quite time that an end was put to the system, or want of system, under which one of the most elementary duties of the Sanitary Authority is altogether neglected in Ipswich."

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The following note which appeared in *The Lancet* of last week upon Russian superstition describes, a ceremony that has long been held by the Russian peasant to be efficacious in keeping away infectious diseases from his village. The superstition is found not only amongst the Russian peasantry, but also amongst the Tchuvashi (a mixed Finnish and Tartar race to be found mostly upon the banks of the Volga and who embraced Christianity only in the last century), and amongst the inhabitants of Siberia. The ceremony appears to be of Pagan origin, but to have borrowed some elements from the Christian religion. Thus in many cases *ikons* and crosses are carried in the procession, and at each stopping place a mark of a cross is made in the ground with the plough. In all cases the time chosen for the ceremony is midnight; the main actors are young unmarried women, but sometimes married women, particularly if newly married, widows and even widowers are allowed to take part in the procession. A preliminary visit to the public baths by the whole village population sometimes precedes the performance. The men then return home, collect and load all the firearms in their possession and await the return of the procession. Twelve young women, each wearing a single garment and with dishevelled hair, are meanwhile harnessed to a plough and proceed to make with it a furrow round the whole village. They are followed by the other women and children, all making as loud a noise as possible in order to frighten away the spirit of the disease, whilst some chant prayers or other religious music with the same object. Various curious articles are carried in the procession, such as fire-irons, the skull of an animal, the horns of an ox, and, as has been already stated, *ikons* or religious pictures. Sometimes a rotten tree-trunk is set on fire and carried as a torch. In some cases ashes and sand are carried and sprinkled wherever a road or path crosses the furrow made by the plough, whilst a doggerel couplet is sung, which may be tranlated roughly:

"If sand and ashes rise and sprout,
The cholera will come no doubt."

Another formula of exorcism is addressed to the spirit of cholera in the following words: "Away from us, thou Misfortune! a hundred *sajenes* above, a hundred *sajenes* below, and a hundred *sajenes* on either side of our village."

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When the circuit of the village is completed the ceremony is sometimes allowed to finish, but frequently a further series of rites is solemnly gone through, at any rate amongst the Tchuvashi. The boys of the village pass from house to house, pelting each one with stones and other things in order to drive out evil spirits. The personified disease (cholera is generally conceived in the form of a woman) is evidently supposed to have the power of reading, and on every door-post may be seen the ludicrous inscription, scrawled in tar, "not at home, come again yesterday." After each house has been well pelted with stones, the owner of the house comes out and presents the boys with all the hens' eggs he has been able to collect. The whole population then proceed to the outskirts of the village, and the eggs are there boiled and eaten, to the accompaniment of certain heathenish invocations written for the occasion by the old men of the village. A high lying piece of ground is then selected, and two mounds of earth are raised on it. Every man, women and child then passes singly between the mounds, shouting furiously all the time, whilst certain men armed with pieces of bone, wave these over their heads and clash them together so as still further to increase the din. When this part of the ceremony is over, and all the fire-arms have been fired off, the peasants return to their homes fully convinced that they have done all that is possible to keep away any self-respecting disease. So, at least, the elder generation firmly believes. The younger members of the community are said in many villages to be sceptical as to the value of these midnight rites; but such firmly rooted beliefs die hard, and it will probably be many generations before they disappear altogether from the mind of the Russian peasant.

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