

and other similar social troubles which embitter life, and, if they excite any feeling at all among the community, it is a feeling of disapproval or contempt. But it is otherwise with "honourable suicides." These are the result of outraged or threatened virtue, insulted or tarnished honor, failure in politics or war, and they command the respect and admiration of the community. It is curious to find that Sutteeism is not infrequent among the Chinese. A young woman whose betrothed has died before marriage, wives and daughters who have lost their husbands or fathers, nay, husbands and fathers who have lost their wives and children, esteem it a virtue to follow them into the next world, and their conduct in putting an end to their own life under the circumstances is publicly applauded and held up as a pattern for imitation. So deliberately is the act of suicide committed in China that its perpetrators deck themselves out in grand clothes before they destroy themselves, believing that they will appear in the new life in the clothes in which they die. In any community where suicide is a custom tolerated or honoured, it is not strange to find the suicidal idea and its practical realization common. The only remedy appears to be to eradicate this idea, and this has been to some extent successfully attempted in India by discountenancing and suppressing the various kinds of justifiable or commendable self-murder which used to be resorted to.

Reviews.

A few remarks on the Theory and Practice of Drainage in the Hooghly District.

THE subject of village drainage in Lower Bengal is one of great sanitary importance. Rajah Degumber Mitter has during the last fifteen years, with great intelligence and commendable persistence, pressed its importance on the Government and public in relation to fever causation. His views have always commanded attention, and have latterly resulted in practical effort, as the evidence which he has so industriously collected demonstrating the evils caused by defective and obstructed drainage has grown in bulk and point. The latest indication of the influence of the Rajah's opinions and facts is the publication, in the *Calcutta Gazette* (of May 1878), of a Resolution, bearing date 29th April 1878, impressing upon Magistrates the importance of village drainage and of removing obstructions to drainage caused by artificial constructions—roads, railways, embankments, &c)—or by the natural silting up of channels which remove surplus water from the land. The digging of tanks for the purpose of supplying good water, and serving in very level tracts as auxiliaries to drainage, is also commended. The issue of this resolution appears to have been caused by a letter from Rajah Degumber Mitter submitting a copy of his well-known work ("Epidemic Fever in Bengal," reviewed by this journal in June 1872 and April 1877.) The anonymous pamphlet now under notice contains a good deal of sensible and practical information and advice on village drainage. The author possesses clear and correct views on the subject, and puts them down plainly and convincingly. His theory of the *modus operandi* of natural drainage

is the same as the Rajah's. He points out, as the Rajah has done, that the river bank is the highest point of the land level; that the slope is from the river towards the *jolah* or swamp in the interior; that the natural tend of surface water is in the same direction, and that the swamps are finally drained by *khals* which, entering the river lower down, convey the water into it. He shows, however, that the slope of the land towards the *jolah* is very gentle, and that the level of the *jolah* is considerably higher than that of the river, except for short occasional periods and under temporary circumstances. He advocates the construction of artificial drains into the river rather than the *jolah* in most cases on account of the shorter distance and better fall obtainable. In this we are inclined to agree with him. He distinguishes between a drainage slope and a drainage channel, and demonstrates the great advantage of getting the water into channels as soon as possible, otherwise stagnation and saturation are inevitable even with a considerable drainage slope. The advantage of petty cuts from the interiors of houses, gardens and flat lands, to ditches and main drains is forcibly indicated. Many shrewd practical hints are given regarding the construction of drains and the detection and treatment of obstructions. The brochure appears to us to be intelligible and sound, and on sanitary grounds we strongly commend its object, and we hope that it may prove of use to those who recognise the importance of village drainage and endeavour to improve it.

On Cobra Poison. By ALEXANDER PEDLER, F. C. S., *Professor of Chemistry in the Presidency College, Calcutta.*

THIS is a reprint from the proceedings of the Royal Society. Professor Pedler finding that the addition of hydrochloric acid weakened the effect of cobra poison, tried a number of chemicals into whose composition chlorine enters, and at last found that the addition of a solution of platinum tetrachloride to the poison some time before injection causes chemical changes in it which to a great extent abolish its virulence. A yellow amorphous precipitate is formed, and neither the precipitate nor liquid appear to be very poisonous. When the material was injected immediately after mixing, the antidotal effect of the mixture was not so apparent, and experiments made with a view of indicating the antidotal power of the platinum salt in the living tissues were a failure.

The utmost that Professor Pedler claims is that he has discovered a "chemical antidote" to the venom. He has certainly given grounds for believing that the platinum salt when mixed with cobra poison in a test glass, causes chemical changes which reduce or obliterate its poisonous quality, but he has failed to prove that the same result which takes place in the test glass takes place in the tissues. The discovery is therefore of no practical value. The author proposes, we observe, to continue his experiments in conjunction with Dr. E. Laurie.

Hydayat-ul-hukuma: A Guide to Medical Officers and Subordinates of the Indian Service.

By GEO. L. RANKING, A. B. A., M. B., Cantab, Surgeon, Indian Medical Service. Calcutta, Thacker Spink & Co.

THIS little work is designed to be an aid to passing the "Lower Standard Examination" and assist young officers of the Indian Medical Service in understanding their duties on first appointment to a Native Regiment. It consists of a grammar, a few hints and rules connected with hospital management, select sentences (Hindustani and English) relating to hospital work, a list of returns and a vocabulary (English-Hindustani). We have no doubt that the little work will be found useful for the purposes