The Diseases of Printers.

By Dr. van Holsbeek.

Dr. van Holsbeek having enumerated the diseases resulting from overwork, from intemperance, want of cleanliness, vicious habits, protracted watching, &c., proceeds to speak of the morbid affections more specially belonging to the printer's art. Fissures of the lips, of varying depths, are of frequent occurrence; at other times tumors are developed on the inner surface of the same parts, which are nothing else than follicles whose excretory ducts are closed. These tumors sometimes inflame, become highly painful, rapidly ulcerate, and assume a cancerous appearance. Such affections of the lip are owing to the habit some compositors have of putting into their mouth the types still moist with the fluid which has served to wash them. Dyspepsia is frequent, as is diarrhœa; the latter is, however, of a transitory and mild nature. Among the most common affections are those of the respiratory passages, of which laryngitis and bronchitis are the principal; pleuritis is rare; pleuro-pneumonia is frequent and severe. These diseases are favored by the curved position which the printers are obliged to maintain during their work, particularly when they cor-

The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal as published by
For personal use only. No other uses without permission. From the NEJM Archive. Copyright © 2010 Massachusetts Medical Society.
rect on the forms, and still more by the night-work, by gas-light, by the dust and emanations in places often confined and badly ventilated. Nearly twenty-five per cent. of printers die of tuberculosis, either hereditarily or acquired. Diseases of the heart prevail among the pressmen; hemorrhoids are rare; varices and varicose ulcers are of frequent occurrence; the compositors who correct on the form frequently suffer from cerebral congestions and hæmorrhage. Among nervous diseases we observe tremor of the hands, against which the author successfully employs the electric current. Saturnine colic and paralysis are rarer than formerly, an improvement due principally to the difference in the composition of the materials of which the type is made, to the precaution of cleaning it from dust, as well as frequently rubbing the boxes which contain it; lastly, to the care of the workmen, who no longer put the letters in their mouth. Hernia is common, particularly among the pressmen; in them we occasionally observe distortion of the joints of the fingers. Fissures and callosities form on the thumb and index finger of the right hand, on account of the roughness of the characters, particularly if they are new and damp with the matters with which they are polished; moreover, in consequence of the habit the printers have of washing themselves with alkaline water or bad soap. Amblyopia and myopia, so very prevalent among typographers, terminate the sketch drawn by the author of the diseases of this interesting class of artisans, with whom we are in daily contact, and whose intelligence and diligence we have constant reason to admire.—Lo Sperimentale, December, 1859, page 560.

THE BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

BOSTON: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1860.

The Hunter Memorial.—We have been requested to call the attention of the subscribers to the Hunter Fund to a portion of a letter from Mr. South, President of the Royal College of Surgeons, to the Chairman of the Massachusetts Committee. We would also inform the profession in Berkshire, Bristol North and Hampden Counties, whence no subscriptions have, as yet, been received by the Committee, that there will be time enough still left to collect any sums, even the smallest, before the final closing up of the subscription from this side of the Atlantic.

The National Committee, whose circular we printed in our last number, will not finish their labors until after the next meeting of the American Medical Association, at Chicago, in 1861. As the sum is small ($1.00), we cannot but hope that many in those counties, and perhaps from other parts of the State from which reports have already been made, will avail themselves of the present occasion to enrol their names as willing contributors to the fund, the sole object of