

HATTING.

AS AFFECTING THE HEALTH OF OPERATIVES.

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At the request of the State Board of Health, of New Jersey, I have, for some months past, been investigating the sanitary relations of the business of hatting.

Inquiry reveals the fact that in the U. S. Medical Library, at Washington, there is no entire volume in English on this subject. Neither in the Astor Library, in New York, nor in the Mercantile Library, in the same city, could anything be found on the healthfulness of trades in general. Which facts would seem to indicate the need of an awakening of our individual physicians as well as boards of health to a more thorough examination of all the hygienic conditions of factory life.

A paper by Dr. J. Addison Freeman, of Orange, on the "Mercurial Diseases among Hatters," appeared in the published transactions for 1860, of the New Jersey State Medical Society, in which it was stated that more than one hundred cases of this disease had occurred in Orange alone. The symptoms were: "Swelling and ulceration of the gums, loosening of the teeth, fetor of the breath, abnormal flow of saliva, tremors of the upper extremities, or a shaking palsy and frequently some febrile action." These cases recovered under the usual remedies for mercurial salivation, especially iodide of potassium, or without any treatment if the work was abandoned for a time. This disease occurred exclusively among the hat finishers, and the presence of mercury having been established by chemical tests in the hat bodies before going through the process of finishing, it seemed clear that the hot iron volatilized the mercury, and the close, ill-ventilated rooms favored the absorption of it in the system, and so the workmen were poisoned. The greater prevalence than usual, of the disease at that time, was found to be due to the use of a larger amount of mercury in order to render poor