Eye Injuries among Stone Breakers

Among the writer's very early recollections of his childhood when he lived in the depth of the country are the village blacksmith in his smithy, the pedlar and his pack, a morose individual, the local butcher, who still wore the agriculturalists' smock frock, and the road mender breaking stones at the side of the road. The last named wore large protective goggles to avoid eye injuries. He was a formidable figure to the infant mind, and the goggles, made we believe of a fine wire mesh, added to the feeling of fear which his appearance at first sight engendered. In reality he was a most respectable member of my father's congregation and, without the goggles, very pleasant company.

We have recently been making enquiries as to the frequency of eye injuries among the flint knappers of East Anglia. This must certainly be one of the oldest occupations in the world and we are informed that injury to the eyes is exceedingly rare among them. Much of their work is done on a leather shield strapped on to the left leg above the knee, though the finer work is done on a bench. The knapper knows by long experience how to place his flint. These large flints mostly have flaws in them and the knapper percusses with his hammer with light taps until he has found the right spot and then gives a smart blow on it. Fragments appear to fly downwards and sideways and perhaps this may account for the rarity of eye injuries. This part of his work is rather different from that of the road mender whose fragment of stone lies on a bed of similar fragments, or on the ground nearby, with very little resilience beneath it. The bench work would seem more nearly to approximate that of the road mender, but so far as we could learn injury to the eye is very rare and the few knappers who still ply their trade do not wear, so far as we know, any form of eye protection.

ABSTRACTS

MISCELLANEOUS


Danielson and Long comment on the rarity of keratitis associated with epidemic parotitis and state that only 7 cases have been reported in the literature. The disease arises 2 to 11 days