Of all the metals that man so skilfully learned to extract from the bowels of the earth, iron and copper are particularly useful, much more so than silver and gold. The Mexicans, to whom nature gave silver and gold instead of iron and copper, were in envy of the iron armour and weapons of the Europeans. Copper has been put to an infinity of uses since ancient times. Athenaeus says that Plato and Lycurgus decreed that copper and iron were the most indispensable metals in their republics. Coins used to be minted solely in copper, hence the term "aererius". In this chapter I shall deal with the illnesses that afflict coppersmiths. In particular, those who work with copper in their city workshops, not copper miners who I have already mentioned in the first chapter on metal miners. In every city, for example in Venice, these workers are grouped together in a single quarter and they spend the whole day malleating copper, making it ductile so they can make vessels of various kinds. This is so noisy that everyone else flees from such an unbearable place and only the workers themselves live there. One can observe these workers, usually sitting on small mounds of earth, bent over all day hammering, with wood then with iron, working the newly-mined copper until it is as ductile as required. It is obvious that this constant din hurts both their ears and head. In fact, these workers become half deaf and, if they continue this profession until they are old, stone-deaf. Because of that constant percussion, the tympanum of the ear loses its natural tension and the repercussion of the internal air towards the outside weakens and subverts the entire hearing apparatus. The same thing happens to those who live next to the Nile in Egypt because of the excessive roar of the falling water: they all become deaf. Coppersmiths also become hunchbacked
because of the bent position they assume while working, as is also the case with those who malleate gold, drawing it out into fine leaf.

In addition to the ailments of the ears and head, the lungs and stomachs of these workers are also affected. As the workers themselves have confirmed, this is because when they malleate the beaten copper, poisonous vapours arise from the copper, entering via the mouth to reach the stomach and lungs. Copper is used in the preparation of a great number of medicines, for example flowers of copper, copper scales and verdigris, which all have emetic and corrosive properties. These corrosive and drying effects are experienced by coppersmiths who take it up through inspiration. I have asked them more than once if their eyes were troubled and they replied that this was never the case, which is in agreement with Macrobius, who wrote that those with sore eyes who then worked in copper mines were cured. Moreover, copper is used in the preparation of eye salves.

I cannot see which remedies might be recommended to treat diseases of this nature. Their ears could be plugged with cotton to protect the internal parts and, when they are bruised and battered by the constant noise, they could be rubbed with sweet almond oil. To correct the excessive dryness with which the lungs are affected, emulsions of almonds or melon or pumpkin seeds in violet water, barley-water, or the like will help; whey and milk-based dishes are also recommended. If the worker is by nature dried out, parched, and prone to lung ailments, the only remedy is to give up that trade and take to another. The worst way to make one's living is one that leads to an early death. When a coppersmith is forced to take to his bed because of a severe illness, for example fever, the physician should know what his trade is. Indeed, when suffering from acute fever, the workers frequently complain of a ringing in their ears, which they believe to be a bad omen, but only because according to Hippocrates, such noises are a dangerous symptom. It is not at all surprising that the hearing of coppersmiths has been impaired and when they have a high fever such noises are accentuated. During lung ailments, care should be taken that the dryness of the lungs, which is common in coppersmiths, is not exacerbated by fever. This can be done by moistening them with frequent emulsions.
Diseases of wood workers

Next to grain, the most useful thing nature has produced for mankind is trees and woods. Indeed, as Pliny so rightly says, “Formerly, they provided him with food, their foliage carpeted his cave, and their bark served him for raiment”. With the invention of the saw, men began to cut trees into boards and thus build houses, as well as putting them to a thousand other uses. It is believed that Lyons in Gaul was once entirely built of wood; indeed, according to Seneca, it was burnt down in just one night – when the country folk came to the next morning and could no longer see the city, they asked themselves in amazement what had happened. Hence regarding the pitiful state of man, Seneca exclaimed: “For centuries a forest, in a moment only ashes!”. Even today, cities are built entirely of wood in the northern regions. In Moscow one can visit vast workshops that sell beautiful houses such that one can envisage what they will be like, small, average-sized and large, depending on the clients’ wishes, and it is possible to have one ready in just a few of days on a designated site.

Although the class of woodworkers comes under one single heading, their profession encompasses a variety of specific categories – those who specialize in the construction of carriages and coaches, others in casks and vats, and yet others in the building of ships. Some specialize in carving elegant frames to be gilded for mirrors and paintings. In general, this is a tiring trade and fatigues those who do it. Those who cut down trees to make boards suffer the most because of the great physical effort this entails. Once the squared-trunk has been placed on two logs, one worker stands on the trunk, while the other stands below it with a great saw and cuts the lines that have been marked in red. Hippocrates describes this
activity beautifully in his first book on diet, using the following words, “As when sawyers cut up timber with a saw, one pulls, the other pushes, though both are of course doing the same thing; the man who pushes downwards pulls at the man above him, otherwise the saw could not move downwards, but if they use too much force they will make a mess of the entire job”. The man standing above the trunk works harder than the one below, because he has to pull a rather heavy saw upwards. The man below has the considerable disadvantage of the sawdust that continuously gets in his eyes and mouth as well; this makes his eyes red and subsequently painful, so that of necessity he is nearly always blinking them closed.

Those who work at the lathe, in particular those who work with box-wood, olive wood, terebinth, or the like, have an extremely strenuous task, since they have to put a constant strain on their hands and arms to control the chisel and gradually shave off the right amount, depending on the object being made. They also have to use their right foot in continuation to turn the wood to be shaped turning round and around. They also have to stare intently and the circumvolution of the wood harms the eyes, because it stimulates their spirits and humours through the vertiginous motion. The material they are handling causes almost no harm to wood workers, with the exception of cypress wood, which they find hard to bear because its pungent smell causes headaches.

I have no remedies for the diseases of wood workers. I can only recommend they work in moderation, because if they are too intent on earning money, they will find themselves off work for many days. Gentle massage with oil is good for them, as it is for all those who are fatigues from overwork. They should also look after their eyes so they suffer as little as possible and take a break from the work every now and then; if they hurt or are reddened, they should be rinsed with mild substances such as barley water, violet water, or woman’s milk. If a woodworker is afflicted by severe illness from some other cause, the doctor must be as careful about administering strong remedies, as is the case with other workers whose strength has been greatly taxed by heavy toil.
Diseases of razor and lancet grinders

I believe there are very few trades that are harmless and inflict little ill on the workers doing them. Who would believe that those who sit at a small grindstone and sharpen the razors used by barbers and the lancets used by surgeons for blood-letting lose their eyesight? However, experience has shown us that this is true and it should come as no surprise, given that these workers have to keep their eyes fixed on the grindstone that is constantly turning at high speed. It is therefore inevitable that the tonus of the eyes becomes weakened and the eyesight becomes dim in the course of time, as happens to all those who do fine work. After working the entire day, these workers, and especially those who head is none too steady, so that even after work they still see the grindstone turning. This external cause probably sets the humours of the eye in motion, the aqueous ones in particular as they are mobile by nature, and this makes the animal spirits rotate round, thus undermining normal ocular function. There is a highly skilled craftsman in this city who has made a considerable amount of money from sharpening razors and lancets. After a whole day's work, his eyes are reddened and he is afflicted by attacks of severe ophthalmia, which he blames on his work alone. I have asked other workers and they all complain of the same eye ailments. Furthermore, having to make the large wooden wheel turn with their right foot in order to move the small grindstone is very exhausting work. Some workers manage to avoid this by having young boys keep the contrivance spinning. Nonetheless, using their hands and arms, these workers tire themselves considerably although it is their eyes that suffer the most. The only assistance I can offer these workers is to recommend moderation and to interrupt their work, in other
words, to pay more heed to their health than their earnings. The cures are the same that I mentioned earlier for the "fine worker", that is, those who tire their eyes by working with tiny objects, are to be administered to those who sharpen razors and lancets. I shall not risk boring the reader by repeating them.
Diseases of brickmakers

There is almost no doubt that primitive man was unaware of the art of constructing houses "When a chilly cave provided both herds and owners with shelter and hearth". Later, more comfortable dwellings were built using reeds, straw, and then huts made of stone and tufa, all of which abounded in nature. These huts can still be seen in the mountains, made of rocks put together with mud as mortar, and roofed with lath and slate. However, since stones were not at hand on the plains and flatlands, man learned how to make bricks with mud, dry them in the sun, and bake them in ovens. This is how better formed and solid brick houses originated. Today, brickmakers must also be included among the various categories of skilled workers; they work is called for both to repair old houses and build new ones. We therefore also need to know what diseases are caused by their trade. It is not necessary to describe how bricks are made and baked in ovens. This is generally well-known, as one can frequently observe such workers outside the city walls and elsewhere. This work is much more laborious than others, indeed, fit for slaves; in Egypt, this task fell to the Israelites and all they received for their pains was garlic and onions.

Bricks are made under the hot sun in the open air. After having kneaded the mud properly, it is dried thoroughly and then placed in ovens until it becomes as hard as stone. The workers' bodies can therefore not avoid becoming hard and dry and consequently subject to serious illnesses, such as malignant fevers not uncommonly of an inflammatory nature. They are exposed to all weathers - cold air in the mornings, the scorching sun at midday, the milder air in the evenings, frequently drenched by rain. Their diet is rustic: bread of inferior quality, onions, garlic, and vapid wine. It
is therefore not at all surprising that these workers are afflicted by serious illnesses; in fact, it is amazing how they manage to survive such a strenuous job for months. Fevers in these workers are nearly always accompanied by delirium and, if they do recover, it usually turns into chronic forms such as quartan fever, with a poor constitution or even dropsy. Most of these workers are country folk so that when they are overcome with fever, they usually return to their peasant hut and trust in nature for their recovery. Otherwise they are taken to hospitals where doctors administer the remedies they usually give to other patients, i.e. purgatives and blood-letting, ignoring the exhaustion and fatigue caused by these workers’ trade.

An excellent remedy for these poor workers is a freshwater bath, as soon as the fever appears, for their bodies are squalid and, by moistening the skin, the pores are opened and the heat of the fever may escape. However, the baths that were once so close to the hearts of physicians in antiquity are no longer in fashion. In Rome baths used to be common practice; after a day’s work towards the evening, the workers would go to the public baths where they would pay a small sum to wash themselves clean, simultaneously laying aside the filth they had come in contact with and their fatigue, thus making them less susceptible to the illnesses than today’s workers. No matter what their social rank, sex, or age, everyone would go to the baths. Even women and young girls would go to the baths in the early days of Christianity, as can be seen in the Epistle from Saint Jerome to Eustochium, in which he reminds her that although young girls should take a bath both for the sake of personal hygiene and health, care must still be taken so as not to appear naked. Saint Jerome might have been of the opinion that virgins should take baths in the dark, with the windows closed or at night, since public baths had degenerated from their former practice into a state of over-luxuriousness. What Seneca wrote on the subject deserves reading. He describes Scipio’s villa after he had defeated Carthage and retired in voluntary exile in Liternum where, “In a tiny bathroom, the terror of Carthage used to wash his tired body of the fatigues of the countryside. He did not wash every day because, in accordance with the ancient customs of Rome, one washed one’s arms and legs every day, that is, the parts one dirties when working, and all the other parts on market days”. Thus, brickmakers, who live in mud as it were, would do well to take baths,
both for their personal hygiene and to cure their illnesses. However, as is generally known, since Christianity is more concerned with the state of the soul than that of the body, the habit of taking baths gradually fell into disuse, and medicine cannot now adopt a remedy that would be so beneficial in almost all illnesses.

Unlike brickmakers who have to work exposed to the scorching sun and fire, while digging wells in the middle of the summer, well-workers, far from sun and fire, are exposed to the cold and damp. There is no demand for their work in the winter and spring, when the earth is wet. When "Procion and the star of Fierce Leo are raging," is the most suitable season for digging new wells, clearing old ones, and finding aquifers at greater depths. This work involves serious risks. Well-workers go from the hot to the cold and the cold to the hot, from the dry to the damp and vice versa. It is therefore highly likely that these lengthy stays in the cold and the damp produce the waters flowing into the wells block their skin pores and obstruct perspiration, thus resulting in spilling stubborn fevers. There is another cause, this of malaria fever, the terrible vapors that arise from the wells, in particular in the hills and mountains where there is sulphur, mire, and other minerals that corrupt the spirits and humors of those digging the wells. The risk in wells in the countryside and on plains are not as high, but there is still a particular smell, hence the same fevers. In the face of their need for fresh air, it is acceptable that the utilitarian spirit, by nature of its terrestrial atmosphere are harmed by the tainted air of wells. The category of workers includes those who clean the disinfected in water systems from the rain water that flows down from the rooftops via pipes and gutters. This work is prevalent in Venice in particular, above all in summer. It involves a lengthy process of brushing and cleaning the interiors; these workers are afflicted by the same diseases as well-drivers.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention the wells in the area around Modena, from which we get this famous wine.
Diseases of well-diggers

Unlike brickmakers who have to work exposed to the scorching sun and fire, while digging wells in the middle of the summer, well-workers, far from sun and fire, are exposed to the cold and damp. There is no demand for their work in the winter and spring, when the earth is wet. When “Procyon and the star of fierce Leo are raging”, is the most suitable season for digging new wells, cleaning old ones, and finding aquifers at greater depths. This work involves serious risks. Well-workers go from the hot to the cold and the cold to the hot, from the dry to the damp and vice-versa. It is therefore highly likely that these lengthy stays in the cold and the damp produced from the waters flowing into the wells block their skin pores and obstruct perspiration, thus resulting in spiking stubborn fevers. There is another cause, this of malignant fever: the terrible vapours that arise from the wells, in particular in the hills and mountains where there is sulphur, nitre, and other minerals that corrupt the spirits and humours of those digging the wells. The risks in wells in the countryside and on plains are not as high, but there is still a particular smell, hence the name puteus. In the face of their need for fresh air, it is inevitable that the animal spirits, by nature of the terrestrial atmosphere are harmed by the tainted air of wells. This category of workers includes those who clean the dirt deposited in water cisterns from the rain water that flows down from the rooftops via pipes and gutters. This work is required in Venice in particular, above all in summer. It involves a lengthy process of brushing and cleaning the cisterns; these workers are afflicted by the same diseases as well-diggers.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention the wells in the area around Modena, from which we get that famous white,
pure petroleum that is unique in the whole of Europe. In the Apennines there is a mountain called “Festino” about twenty miles from Modena. On its peak is a small plateau with a number of wells, both new and old, from which is collected the petroleum that has poured out and is floating on the water. These wells are extremely deep and were dug using only a chisel and hammer, because the whole mountain is made of siliceous rock. This is why the inhabitants call this petroleum “rock-oil”. When a new well is dug, the well workers are overcome by the smell that pervades the air all around. I recall that when I went there to visit the wells, I could smell the petroleum a mile away. It sometimes the case that while chiselling, a well-worker happens to break into a vein of petroleum that then gushes forth. He then shouts loudly so that they pull him up on the rope as quickly as possible so he is not suffocated down there. Now and then, a man has been pulled up in time, but he was already having short of breath. It is said that some of these poor workers have suffocated miserably after opening a vein that was particularly rich in petroleum. I once published an epistle on the petroleum of Monte Festino that I had sent to the illustrious Abbot Don Felice Viali, director of the botanical gardens in Padua. I also had a treatise by Francesco Ariosto, *Libellum de Petroleio Montis Zibinii*, reprinted, which Olinger Jacobi had found in manuscript in the Royal Library of Copenhagen and had himself had printed in Copenhagen. The petroleum of Monte Zibini is easily extracted because there is a deep valley where there is a small ditch and this is where it floats on the water; this petroleum is red and cannot be compared to that of Monte Festino, which is very white and has a less unpleasant smell.

In Modena there is another category of well-workers that digs wells in the middle of winter and not in the summer. These wells differ greatly from the previous ones because springs of fresh water that are very pure and clear can be found here. I published a treatise of a physical-hydrostatical nature on the exceptional nature of these springs and I have given it to a printer in Padua to have it reprinted, since the first edition was completely sold out and it was in great demand with students of natural history. It would take too long to describe how these wells are laid down. Suffice it to say, there are alternate layers of earth, chalky and marshy, and below these is a sandy layer with very fine gravel. Once the diggers have reached this last layer of earth, they know they have finished because they can
hear the sound of the water flowing. They then press hard on the sides of the well and bore through the layer for two or three ells; the water then gushes forward with such force that the worker, who is sitting on the sides of the borer, has difficulty in being pulled up by rope before the well fills up with water, which then flows out above ground level. Extremely interesting things can be observed while digging such wells - enormous trees buried at such depths, huge bones, and other things that I described in my treatise.

This is an extremely tiring and dirty job. In fact, these workers have to remain in the wells for a whole month in the winter, as I said earlier, because in the summer the fumes given off and the intense cold would be unbearable. So in the winter they stay in these wells, which are so hot they are like a hypocaust, as the heat accumulates with no escape; and they are able to have lights burning which would be extinguished in summer by the fumes given off. Because of the digging and heat, every day when they are leave these wells they are drenched with sweat and cannot help becoming seriously ill and being afflicted by those ailments caused by the blockage of perspiration. The most frequent illnesses well-workers suffer from are those of the chest, distillations, and other illnesses. They are mostly also cachectic as a result of their poor diet, which reflects their state of severe poverty. By the time they are 40 or 50 they look cadaveric and generally take their leave of both their occupation and this world, such is the wretchedness of their condition.

Any physician who has the slightest knowledge of their trade can treat well-workers suffering from an acute or chronic illness. In both cases, the perspiration that was blocked owing to the lengthy stays in such damp and foul places has to be restored, the toxic substances in the body eliminated, and the patient's natural forces restored. Gentle massage of the entire body with ointment of Aetius is beneficial, as is dry cupping and bathing the arms and legs with abundant wine boiled with sage leaves, lavender, rosemary flowers, and the like. Cupping applied to the back, which is an effective remedy against fatigue, is also to be recommended. Blood-letting and the application of leeches to the haemorrhoidal veins should be prescribed only with caution. Purges must be mild and using epicercastics so that the patient's strength is not reduced even more. Aggressive purging, according to Hippocrates, is unhealthy for "those whose diet is unwholesome".
The art of navigation has contributed more than any other to the happiness of mankind and encouraged trade of all kinds, uniting the East with the West, the North with the South. Thanks to navigation, riches that had been conceded to one region or another have become common to all. The origins of this art are ancient and it was held in such high consideration that those who invented it were adored almost as if they were gods. Thus the Argonauts, who sailed all the way to the Colchis, were regarded as heroes, and in the works of poets, the ship Argo was raised to the skies. What would our ancestors say if they could see the armed fleets setting sail from the Pillars of Hercules all the way to Peru, as often happens today? This art has reached the height of perfection and has proved that the existence of men living at the opposite ends of the earth is no fantasy, as was once believed. It is therefore our duty to try and identify the illnesses that sailors and other workers at sea suffer from, or rather, by which diseases they are not afflicted. I shall not go into the diseases of those who sail for trade or other purposes and remain idle on the ships, but rather those sailors who work continuously, day and night. Those who work at sea are exposed to every kind of acute disease and the cause is to be found in their lifestyle and the great suffering they have to endure on this fickle and treacherous element. Chronic diseases are also very common amongst these workers, but not as common as amongst those who work on land. A ship is not a suitable place for someone suffering from a chronic illness. Prior to the invention of the magnetic compass, sailing was very difficult. To stay on course, the pilots would spend the entire night with their eyes fixed on the cynosure. Virgil writes that Palinurus, while he clung to the rudder and "Kept
his eyes on the stars", the great helmsman of the Trojan fleet fell sound asleep and went overboard. Now that we have discovered the use of the compass, the ship pilot no longer fears the perils of the night air and, in the darkest of nights, can remain in his cabin watching the compass, thus steering the ship in any direction he desires at mid-sea, while no one on land would be able to walk with such certainty in the murky night.

As I said earlier, sailors are particularly subject to serious diseases because of the perils at sea, the winds, the sky, and a thousand other difficulties in sailing. They are afflicted by malignant and inflammatory fevers in particular, but these do not last very long, as they end with a crisis that is either favourable or otherwise. The usual rules for medical treatment in these cases do not apply here; as Celsus says, “Seize your treatments with a certain temerity” and act as you would in dire straits. The ship’s master usually takes a good supply of medicines on board, as well as a doctor to administer them. Theriacs and bezoaric antidotes are to be particularly recommended to expel the malignant humours from the more internal parts and to eliminate them by sweating. These remedies must be given in much larger doses than those on the mainland, because the diet of seafarers is very different and therefore favours illnesses of a malignant nature. In his work *Medicina septemtrionalis*, Bonet quotes Thomas Bartholin, who claims that medicines administered to those out at sea must be one third stronger if they are to have the desired effect, and this applies not only to purgatives, but also to diaphoretics, diuretics and any other medicines. In the book by Giovanni di Vigo, surgeon to Pope Julius II, there is a chapter on sailors’ fevers in which the author repeats the need to administer stronger dosages of medicines because their crude diet of salted meats, worm-eaten sea-biscuits, and half-putrid water make the patient’s humours resistant to common remedies. As the saying goes, “For a hard knot, use a wedge to match”. Bartholin and Giovanni di Vigo are referring to those sailors who sail the seas for their own private reasons, but the advice applies even more to sailors and other workers who spend their whole lives at sea.

Compared to other mariners, the plight of oarsmen is even worse – they are chained together on their seats in long rows, exposed to storms, wind and rain and are forced to use all their strength to drive the ship forward, fighting against the strength of the wind
and sea if they do not want to receive a heavy tempest of blows on their heads. The working conditions of these oarsmen cause acute illnesses leading to a quick death finally freeing them from this forced labour. Although they are overcome with exhaustion both night and day, it is surprising how many oarsmen look healthy and robust. Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam explains why: "Because in a certain fashion, a sedentary life supports the stomach, while excessive standing and walking make it sag; thus, activities that use the limbs instead of the stomach and abdomen prolong life, such as rowing and sawing, in which they have to sit and row or move a saw backwards and forwards".

Epidemics are common on ships, either arriving from without or caused by the food, which is generally of the poorest quality. But the most frequent cause is the bad water. Epidemics can also break out when passengers who are unaccustomed to sailing find themselves in violent storms. Fear often causes malignant, contagious fevers that are then also transmitted to the others on board. There is no escape in such a case. Indeed, as the saying goes, they are all in the same boat and find themselves forced to watch impotently while the others die at their side, staring at the grave they are all to share. In such circumstances it is prudent to put all one's trust in the Judge of all things and not in fate, but without overlooking the need to take the antidotes that everyone should have with them on such voyages.

Sailors and seafarers are afflicted by other ailments that are not particularly dangerous, but troublesome nevertheless. Everyone who sails the seas suffers from severe constipation, mainly due to the coarse diet, the very sea-biscuits Pliny recommends in the case of diarrhoea and smoked, salted meats. According to Van Helmont, constipation is caused by the sea air and motion of the waves. Indeed, he says that when at sea, people eat twice as much as they do when on land and empty their bowels less. Their bodies eliminate waste by transpiration, but the bowels become constipated and, as Hippocrates says, "the porosity of the skin corresponds to hardness of the bowels". It is better to put up with this constipation than take purgatives, as these would have to be extremely strong, or the bowels would become even harder. Clysters are not usually given on board ships as the materials needed are unavailable.

Sailors suffer from sleepless nights, as the safety of all those aboard lies in their vigilance and they therefore have little time to
sleep except when the weather is calm. Yet even then, they cannot trust it will last and fall asleep with that on their minds. Sailors are liable to itchiness over the entire body caused by the filth that accumulates on their skin from insensible perspiration. The environment in which they live does not lend itself to the care of personal hygiene, and at times there is not even enough water to wash their faces and hands, let alone their clothes. This is why sailors are infested by lice. Moreover, there are so many bugs it is impossible to avoid being bitten. The stench these insects give off is so pungent that it causes nausea and vomiting, just like bilge water. Since oarsmen are always barefoot, dry, whitish ulcers form on their legs. These are similar to those caused by salty moisture in fishermen, which we discussed earlier, and they should be treated in the same way. Seafarers also suffer from terrible headaches, especially when they are sailing to the East or West Indies. This is because they go from a temperate to a torrid zone where the sky and stars are different, and once they cross the line of the equinox circle they see the shadows falling in the opposite direction. This causes severe headaches and unsettles the balance of body and soul.

No matter what star they were born under, because of the hardships they have to endure, sailors and all those who spend their lives at sea seldom live to a ripe old age, as with those in military camps. What I have said briefly here on the diseases of sailors and their remedies should suffice their relief. The book written by the learned Glauber on this subject entitled *Consolatio navigantium* is of great interest.
Diseases of hunters

We know from the Bible that the art of hunting was a very ancient calling, and has been practised ever since the beginning of the world, after the error of our first forefather. In it we can read of Lamech, the great hunter and founder of many arts, who unintentionally killed Cain with a javelin. In ancient times, probably even before they began cultivating fields and sowing crops, when the life of man was extremely primitive and wild, hunting must have been the easiest way to obtain food. Once towns and cities were built and man had to lead a more social and civil life, hunting became both a passion and pleasure. Today, not everyone has the same freedom to hunt as in the past. Princes and noblemen have created sanctuaries where wild animals and birds are protected from the mass of hunters, so that they can enjoy the exclusive chance to hunt for pure pleasure. Here I shall only speak of those hunters who do so out of the need to make money to feed themselves and their families. Amongst their numerous servants, princes have hunters and fowlers whose only task is to catch animals and birds and to bring their masters these delicacies for their tables. There are also those who are not in service and devote themselves to hunting throughout the year with the same assiduity, taking their prey to city markets where they are paid well by men of leisure who wish to eat things that are out of the ordinary. These hunters are to be praised and not criticized, even though they do sometimes demand exaggerated prices. It is unbelievable just how hard they work and work hard and how many sleepless nights they spend to catch their prey. At times they work the whole day long without catching anything at all and, what is worse, while they are busy devising ways to catch their prey, they themselves fall prey to untamed illnesses.
I shall discuss these diseases and explain why the work of hunters makes them so susceptible to illness. Even the princes and noblemen who devote themselves to this activity cannot always avoid the dangers of hunting. Writers give countless examples of illustrious characters that have been killed by beasts or died because of a serious illness brought on by the heavy labours of hunting. It is truly surprising that men of all social ranks hunt with such passion that they feel neither the hot, nor cold, nor fatigue, forgetting their family and spending the night under the starlit sky, leaving their wives to sleep alone. As Horace says: "The hunter stays all night under the chilly sky with never a thought for his young wife".

Far be it from me to criticize this passion for hunting; indeed, it is a healthy activity and cures many chronic illnesses, as well as preventing many serious ones. According to Rhazes, during a plague only the hunters were immune. Furthermore, hunting is also a form of physical exercise, as Galen himself says, and it exerts not just one part of the body, but all parts at once. Hunters have to walk, run, jump, remain upright then bend over for hours, shout as loudly as they can – in short, they exercise all their body, in the evening or at night, under a rainy sky with stormy winds. However, it is inevitable that at a certain point the body begins to suffer; it becomes fatigued and therefore more susceptible to illness. This is particularly the case with those who hunt for a living and never cease throughout the year, neither in the summer with its sultry heat or in the winter when snow is knee-deep. As Virgil says, "The season to snare the cranes and spread the nets for the stag, to chase the long-eared hare, and to smite the deer with a sling-shot".

In ancient times hunting was much more strenuous. The hunter carried a bow, quiver, and hunting-spears, which hindered him greatly, and he needed strong muscles to carry the bow. Now, guns are generally used, not just for hunting and fowling, but even for fishing. Thus, not even the fish living in the water are safe from the fiery strength of gun-powder.

Those who hunt for living cannot do so in moderation since, just like the city workers, they have to put food on the table. Thus, they are generally subject to serious diseases, depending on the season. In summer they are usually afflicted by high fevers, "cholera sicca", and dysentery due to both the bilious humours that become acrid under the sun's rays and to thirst, hunger, and other bad habits.
Then in winter, the intense cold causes a blockage of the pores and even after a modest sweat, they are afflicted by chest diseases such as pleurisy and pneumonia. They also suffer from severe headaches because the head is the part of the body that is most subjected to the extremes of heat and cold. These workers are also subject to hernia because of the jumps and indelicate movements they make when chasing game.

Physicians know well enough how these illnesses are to be treated. Those treating hunters should keep the following principle in particular in mind – in patients of this kind, their strength has been sapped by the exhaustion and not through an excess of corrupted humours. This means that extreme caution should be exercised when prescribing strong remedies and neither repeated blood-letting nor strong purgatives are advisable. Hunters differ greatly in appearance to those who do physical exercise described by Hippocrates. This is because hunting is not an activity that increases body weight but rather reduces it, so that they end up looking like their very own hunting dogs. This is why Galen says that hunters must be hard and firm and should not reduce their strength by excessive dieting. Those who devote themselves to hunting should be robust, otherwise they will soon be exhausted and afflicted by countless diseases. In Hippocrates there is a very famous passage in which he says that “A eunuch was afflicted by dropsy because of hunting and running”. Hunting is certainly no suitable activity for eunuchs and the impotent, but for those who were born sturdy. These workers should be treated with great care, giving particular care to attemperate their humours, using diaphoretic to bring them to the skin. They are used to sweating, so that when they find themselves bedridden with some serious illness, they find more rapid relief from diaphoretic remedies than any other kind. The ancients used to prescribe baths, but today this is no longer the case. However, if the fever was caused by the cold and obstruction of the skin pores, a freshwater bath is advisable. When an acute illness becomes chronic, in particular in cases of quartan or other fevers, the remedies to remove such blockages and even the use of quinine can be set aside, and the hunters may return to their work, provided they do so with moderation. This will prove the most suitable remedy for them and the very cause of their illness will also restore their health.
What has been said so far about those who hunt animals also applies to fowlers. As they have to venture into woods and fields in search of birds, although to a lesser extent, the fatigue, exhaustion, and sweating that is interrupted by the cool evening air means that they are also afflicted by tertian and quartan fevers, especially in autumn when birds are more easily caught and in greater numbers. Thus, when fowlers use nets to capture larks and quail in October they are frequently afflicted by acute illnesses (this kind of hunting is extremely popular in this region; in the early morning hours, the fowlers, hiding in the reeds, lure the quail with imitation calls). Those who hunt water-fowl run even greater risks, since they spend their days and nights in little boats in the cold winter weather in marshes and ponds. They are often afflicted by malignant fevers, a poor constitution, and even dropsy, caused by the noxious fumes and humidity in the air.