THE EFFECTS OF HEAT IN THE TROPICS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS."

Sir,—In the Journal for May of this year there is the first instalment of a scientific research into the physiological and economic side of Digging. Not long before the war there was an equally valuable inquiry into the physiology of Marching. In my humble opinion these inquiries into the daily round and common task of the soldier constitute a royal road to the success of military medicine, viz.: the prevention of inefficiency. It is only by scientific knowledge of the soldier’s life—food, work, etc.—that we can lay our finger on the weak spots in that life and point out the appropriate alterations and improvements.

The scientific inquiries referred to have reminded me of one subject that has, alas, been neglected by the military-medical service, namely the inefficiency caused by “the Effects of Heat.” Some twelve years ago I referred to this in the Journal in a short article entitled “Heatstroke: a Heresy,” but the article led to no discussion or expression of opinion. The heat in tropical climates affects the efficiency of troops in several ways—health, training, movements, etc.—and leads to a considerable expenditure of money, the ruling factor in present-day soldiering. One need only mention the establishment of the multitude of heat-stroke stations in the Tropics; the continued issue of spine pads under divergent conditions and apparently without scientific reasons, and the issue of salah topis and regulation helmets side by side, as illustration of the work, money and anxiety expended over this question. A scientific inquiry into the Effects of Heat in the Tropics would probably amply repay the cost and labour involved. It is sincerely to be hoped that this inquiry will not long be delayed.

I am, etc.,

Murree, Punjab,
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