

THE IRRITABLE HEART OF SOLDIERS AND THE HAMPSTEAD HEART HOSPITAL.

MAUDE E. ABBOTT, M.D.

McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

Under the stressful conditions of modern warfare, in which exposure to the continuous fusillade of our own and the enemy's guns is combined with the depressing influences of the cold, darkness and moisture of life in the trenches, it is only natural that the soldier in the field should suffer greatly in that most delicate part of his body mechanism, his functional nervous system. Even the strongest men cannot endure the hardships of the firing line for long without respite, and a continuous relief system whereby the men in action are withdrawn to rest-billets at short, regularly recurring, intervals, has of necessity been enforced. In spite of all precautionary measures, however, War Neuroses abound both in base hospitals and convalescent camps, and are especially frequent among the men of less robust physique or less stable mental fibre. The differentiation of such functional conditions from organic troubles or from malingering, the treatment necessary for the improvement of the patient and his rehabilitation as a soldier, and the final decision as to his future capacity for duty at home or abroad according to the extent of his cure, are problems which have taxed the best judgment of the Army Medical Service, and their successful solution promises to be one of the triumphs of military medicine in the present campaign.

One of the most important and efficient measures that has been taken by the British War Office with this end in view, has been the organization of special hospitals under the care of medical experts, and especially equipped, where disorders of various kinds can be studied, classified and treated in a properly scientific manner. Notable examples are the Ramsgate Hospital for Nervous Disorders at Ramsgate, the Bramshott Eye Hospital, and the Military Heart Hospital at Hampstead in London.

It is with this last named institution and with the class of work done there and in the Cardiac Department of other Military hospitals in London, that we are concerned in this communication. Early in the second year of the War the attention of the public was drawn by leading articles in the London Times and in British medical periodicals, to the large numbers of soldiers who were being invalided home from the Front by the now well-