

## Selected Article.

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### SYPHILITIC FEVER, WITH A REPORT OF THREE CASES.

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(From the Service of PROFESSOR WILLIAM OSLER.)

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While its protean characters are universally recognized, physicians do not sufficiently appreciate the fact that syphilis is often responsible for many cases of obscure fever, which clear up only when proper antisyphilitic treatment has been instituted. Even when the fever is associated with a recognizable syphilitic lesion it is often attributed not to the syphilitic infection, but to some other cause, and treated accordingly. The cases, however, which most frequently give rise to an error in diagnosis are those in which at the time there is no outward manifestation of the disease, and where the primary syphilitic infection, with possibly secondary or tertiary symptoms, has occurred so long before that its bearing on the fever is lost sight of. Many cases of syphilitic fever, being unrecognized, are treated as one or other of the acute infectious diseases. The treatment being ineffectual, a more careful physical examination of the patient reveals, possibly, a slight thickening of the clavicles or tibiae or some evidence suggestive of visceral syphilis. Suspicions are then aroused that the fever may be of specific origin and antisyphilitic treatment is begun with a prompt return of the temperature to normal. That this late syphilitic fever is not sufficiently recognized is shown by the fact that few of the writers on syphilis refer to it. Rarely is it mentioned in text-books, though both Osler and Musser emphasize the importance of bearing it in mind in fevers of obscure origin. The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to this interesting symptom and to report a few cases of syphilitic fever which have been admitted to Dr. Osler's wards in the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Syphilitic fever may occur at various periods during the course of the infection.

1. It may occur, in very rare instances, so long as three or four weeks before the onset of the secondary skin eruption. This early fever is puzzling and is likely to be attributed to some other cause until the eruption makes its appearance.