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A FEW THOUGHTS IN REGARD TO SYPHILIS.*

By DR. W. C. HEGGIE, Toronto.

It is with not a little diffidence that I write this paper on a subject so fruitful for discussion ; but it is discussion that is invited, and out of which we may glean new light. It is not my intention to enter into the symptoms, diagnosis, etc., of syphilis, but only to suggest a few ideas in regard to this disease which has been such a curse to humanity and a bug-bear to physicians. It is now several years since this subject became of much interest to me as a study.

In 1885 a patient came to me for treatment with a typical hard chancre, contracted from an undoubtedly syphilitic woman. In six days the sore was healed, but he continued treatment for one year, though from the first month of treatment until the present time he has never had any specific symptoms. He is married, has three healthy children and is a very happy man. One or two cases of that favorable nature made me slightly conceited with my ideas of treatment, but my pride was soon to receive a fall. In 1896 I had a patient with a history of continuous syphilis for two years, he came to me with a large sloughing ulcer, involving two-thirds of the front of right thigh. In spite of treatment his improvement was not satisfactory to me, so I advised him to consult some of the best syphilologists of New York. He did so, but died very soon afterwards. This man, before contracting syphilis, was of a strong robust constitution. His progenitors were clean and with a fine record morally and physically. On inquiry into the history of my first case I found a history of syphilis in his father's parents. In the other benign cases there were histories of previous syphilis in the families. This made me think there might be a lesson learned from these cases, and I watched my next cases with the utmost care, to try and discover if there was not a cause, other than the virulence of the germ, why one person should have a benign case and another a malignant. As a result, to-day I firmly believe that the

*Read by Title at the Ontario Medical Association.