

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

UPPER ABDOMINAL SURGICAL DISEASE—SOME POINTS IN
DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS.

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IF definite symptoms were always produced by, and the result of, definite pathological lesions, diagnosis would be readily reduced to an exact science, but this is far from being the case. It is but too often we find that a definite pathological lesion in one patient will produce a certain train of symptoms, only to find in another patient with the same lesion, a chain of symptoms of a very different character altogether. This is what makes the art of diagnosis so peculiarly difficult. When a scientific diagnosis has been definitely arrived at, treatment is a comparatively easy matter. The mechanical act of removing a portion of the stomach because it is affected by carcinoma, is a much easier task than arriving at the diagnosis at a sufficiently early period to make such action productive of the best results.

For the purpose of studying intimately the differential diagnosis of surgical disease in the upper abdomen, I have selected a few cases of recent date which have been peculiarly difficult to diagnose. Each one of these cases has presented serious difficulties, and I have endeavored to show by what method, and by what reasoning a diagnosis was arrived at. In each case the result is also shown.

CASE I.

On September 8, 1910, I saw in consultation Mr. J. Y. C—— of H——. Though only sixty-four years of age, he presented the appearance of a man at least ten years older. His expression was drawn and haggard, his complexion sallow, dark rings around his eyes, a distinct tinge of jaundice throughout the sclera, and his entire demeanor that of one who had lost all interest in life.

His previous history had been good. At six years of age he had measles, and at fourteen scarlet fever, from which time till the summer of 1909 his health had remained perfectly good. In November of that year he had noticed a lump in his neck which kept gradually enlarging in size, and finally in March of the following year he had it removed, and was told it was carcinoma, though as far as I could learn, no microscopic examination was made of the growth. The wound healed perfectly and gave him no further trouble. This illness, however, appeared to be the starting point of all his future trouble, for following it he had never been entirely well.