

# THE SASKATCHEWAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

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VOL. 2

MAY, 1910

No. 5

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## Original Memoirs

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### "A LESSON IN DIAGNOSIS" \*

By C. N. Cobbett, M.D. (Edin.), Edmonton

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Anyone who has seen much abdominal surgery will admit that however carefully a case may be studied, however typical the clinical features may be, errors in diagnosis are common. It is inevitable that this should be, more especially in mistaking one serious condition for another, but to the careful practitioner it is no less certain that his mistakes will diminish in number in direct ratio to the degree of development of his power of clinical observation and his increasing experience. Within this obvious and transparent truth there lies concealed a curious paradox, for to any one looking back over a long period of study of abdominal diseases it will sometimes appear as if with increasing experience there were more mistakes. This fallacy may be explained in this way, namely, that a more competent observation and a wider experience result in a greater number of cases being diagnosed, before, instead of after, making an exploratory incision, and so the mistakes become more apparent. However, it remains a fact that no matter how conscientiously and carefully a diagnosis is made, many surprises await the surgeon operating for the relief of abdominal diseases. The

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\* Read before "The Central Alberta Medical Association," May 10th, 1910.