

Now if we realize as thoroughly as we should that in acute septic peritonitis the dangerous area, as far as absorption is concerned, is the diaphragmatic zone, and next to that the peritoneum covering the small intestines, certainly this fact will be of infinite importance to us in our treatment of these cases.

As to the *causation* of acute septic peritonitis I would place first, gangrene of some hollow viscus, with or without perforation, notably the appendix. Septic infection may occur quite readily without perforation. All that is necessary is that such a change shall take place in the wall of the intestine as shall permit of the passage through it of septic organisms. Such a condition is present in gangrene and also in cases of distension of the bowel with haemostasis. Hence, as a second cause, one may designate injury to a viscus with distension and haemostasis, as in intussusception, volvulus, internal hernia or post-operative ileus due to paresis. A third cause is ulceration and perforation of some hollow viscus with exudation of its contents; a fourth cause is traumatic rupture of some hollow organ, and lastly, rupture of a local abscess as, for example, in a case of neglected appendicitis.

Now a word in regard to the pathological processes which take when the peritoneum is invaded by septic organisms. Sargent has pointed out that the entrance of streptococci or colon bacilli is usually preceded by the comparatively harmless staphylococci. This is an important factor in the case because the staphylococcus is just enough of an irritant to lead to reaction on the part of the peritoneum and hence to the pouring out of an army of phagocytes which will be already in the field when the real enemy appears. So that the question of priority on the field of battle is a most important one.

If, by any means, we can delay the invading army even for a few hours until nature has an opportunity to furnish the leucocytes so necessary for the defence we shall probably win, because, after all, the surgeon in the case is only a very humble assistant to the natural resources of the patient's organism.