

in a respectful manner—by referring to the observations and conclusions of those who have gone before, he finds himself confronted by the fact that here, in connection with the great omentum, there is little to be said unless he travels back through the centuries. There is no voluminous literature, no array of modern continental authorities, whose names, in length and difficulty of pronunciation, are in inverse proportion to the facts and theories they bring forward. There are, it is true, isolated observations upon the omentum, of recent date—observations of great value by Ranvier, Durham and others; but for any attempt at broad generalization upon the functions of the same we have to wander back to the seventeenth century, and beyond that to the fathers of medicine. And strangely enough, passing back to the limits of medical history, we find that old Hippocrates noted that which, as I shall have later occasion to point out, was perhaps more nearly correct than any of the observations for long centuries following. In addition to his aphorism that if the omentum protrude it necessarily mortifies and drops off, he makes a longer reference in his book “περὶ τοῦ σπλινος.” Writing concerning exudations, he turns to one side to refer to the spleen. “In fever,” says he, “the spleen becomes enlarged, increasing in size as the body becomes emaciated. Indeed, everything which causes the spleen to become enlarged consumes the body. When the body becomes emaciated, if the spleen be swollen and the great omentum attenuated at the same time as the body, then the fat which was in the omentum is dissolved, and when the organ is free from fat, the growing spleen furnishes a flux, and the omentum, which is close by, which has vessels, and those vessels empty, receives that flux.”²

² Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate, Littré's edition, Paris, 1849, p. 311.