

surrounding structures if it is permitted to give its physiological attention to a single area. It is a well-known fact which every one who frequently operates during the acute attack of appendicitis, has had many opportunities to observe that the omentum crowds itself about any inflammatory or traumatic lesion within the peritoneal cavity the moment the latter occurs, and if left undisturbed, a few hours will suffice to cause efficient protective adhesions. These adhesions become stronger every hour and the blood supply in the omentum becomes greater, so that if no disturbance arises, one can reasonably expect efficient protection to the general peritoneal cavity from the omentum.

Another important fact must not be lost sight of in this connection. The fact that the surrounding structures are relatively fixed in position favours the condition of rest of the inflamed part and permits the omentum to act after the manner of a splint applied to an inflamed joint. The value of rest as a preventative to the extension of an infection in any part of the body cannot be over-estimated. Consequently, if it is possible for us to secure this condition of rest, we have gained another important point in the right direction.

In case the appendix is displaced upwards its position is even more favourable, because the available amount of omentum is thus increased. Again, if the appendix is retro-caecal in its position, which is very frequently the case, the infection of the general peritoneal cavity is more easily prevented than when in its normal location. If anteriorly misplaced, it is likely to be fastened to the anterior abdominal wall by the adherent omentum.

It is plain, then, that the infection of the general peritoneal cavity must occur from a disturbance on the part of the small intestines, and must be due to their peristaltic motion. It is significant that in almost all cases of severe acute appendicitis, the obstruction to the passage of gas and intestinal contents through the ileo-caecal valve is one of the early symptoms. Nature is trying to prevent this very dangerous disturbance by closure of the ileo-caecal valve. We have a condition corresponding to the contraction of the muscles surrounding an inflamed joint, to the closure of the eyelids in conjunctivitis, etc. Moreover, the muscles overlying the appendix become tense. Everything tends toward the establishment of conditions of rest in the vicinity of the inflamed organ.