



The
Battle
Creek
Idea



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BEHIND the Battle Creek Sanitarium as it stands today, the first and it is believed the most complete institution of its kind in the world, is the continuous effort and accumulated experience of nearly half a century. Governed by the law of enduring growth, it had its origin in small beginnings and developed gradually but surely to its present large dimensions. As in most other cases, too, in which true and permanent success has blessed an undertaking, its good fortune must be attributed mainly to the principles by which it has stood steadfastly throughout its history—principles now known familiarly throughout the civilized world as “The Battle Creek Idea.”

The Secret of the Battle Creek Sanitarium

The success and world-wide repute of the Battle Creek Sanitarium has not been due to any all-healing spring, extraordinary climatic advantages, secret remedy, panacea, or fad of any kind. The magnet which has drawn so many thousands of patients every year to the Sanitarium from every quarter of the globe has been simply the fundamental principle of curing by natural means, applied completely and systematically, and with scientific sanity and precision.



The Battle Creek Sanitarium is everywhere recognized as the leading representative of physiotherapy, or healing by natural means, because here first of all were gathered together and organized into a scientific system the various natural healing agencies which previously had been employed separately and empirically. But the principles and methods embodied in what is known as the Battle Creek Idea did not originate in Battle Creek. They are old as the race, older even than civilization as we know it; for untutored savages of prehistoric times knew and made use of the healing resources of nature. So, indeed, have the wild animals for untold ages. Civilized man, unfortunately, has wandered so far away from the straight path of simple, healthful life for which he was intended that he has largely lost sight of the value of the kindly forces of Nature, and in his blindness and ignorance has come to trust too implicitly in the artificial methods of his own devising. The wiser minds of every epoch have regretted this, and many have been the efforts to recover the lost companionship with Nature. Two of these efforts, one in the life of old Greece, the other in our own America of a recent generation, are worth noting as precursors of the Battle Creek movement.



Forerunners of the Battle Creek Idea

More than two thousand years ago, Pythagoras, the celebrated Grecian philosopher, gathered about him several hundred disciples and founded a city of health, where the "return-to-nature" life was strictly followed. Abstinence from all unwholesome foods, especially flesh meats, temperance in all things, an active, out-of-door life, simple dress, purity and uprightness in conduct, were the ideals of this model community. Unfortunately the health city came to an untimely end, owing to the prejudice and misunderstanding of ignorant neighbors; but the principles survived.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, a remarkable group of New England men and women joined hands for the purpose of realizing the Pythagorean ideal of a "return-to-nature" community. Among the hundred or more who associated in the "Brook Farm Experiment" were some of the most brilliant leaders in the intellectual life of America: Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Charles Dana, George Ripley, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, and others. They gathered on a farm near Roxbury, Mass., and lived the life of harmony with nature as closely as they could. The community was broken up because of inefficient financial management, but the experiment had a lasting influence for good upon



thousands of those who knew of it. Many years later, Bronson Alcott, the Concord philosopher, and Wendell Phillips, America's greatest orator, visited the Battle Creek Sanitarium as guests at different times, and recognized in the dietary and the general plans and principles of the institution the altruistic ideals which gave rise to the Brook Farm experiment, and to which for fifty years they had personally adhered although the organized effort had failed. Bronson Alcott related to the Sanitarium family of patients and attendants many details of their simple life. His daughter, Louisa M. Alcott, the authoress, with the "little women," of whom she wrote, were all brought up strictly in accord with the dietetic principles embodied in what is now known as the Battle Creek Diet System.

Origin of the Battle Creek Movement

In 1866 a small group of earnest, high-principled men, who believed in altruism and human progress, started a return-to-nature movement in Battle Creek, Michigan, with aims and principles closely akin to those of Pythagoras and Brook Farm. Their object was to preach and practice the natural way in diet, in dress, in the care of the sick—in all that pertained to human life and welfare. To spread their reform, they started a monthly health



journal, still flourishing under the name of *Good Health*; and soon after they purchased a small two-story farmhouse in a grove at one end of the village, and opened up their central institution for the cure of the sick. This was the acorn, as it might be called, from which has grown the sturdy oak of the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

In its earliest days the institution put its chief reliance upon water as a curative agent, and was known as a "water cure," like many other institutions of the kind throughout Europe and America. The healing virtues of water had then come into very wide prominence, owing to the remarkable success of Priessnitz with his water cure at Graefenberg, to which invalids flocked from all over the world. Similar enterprises sprang up everywhere and water became the panacea for every ailment, though applied so crudely and indiscriminately that some harm as well as much good was often done. The Battle Creek "water cure" attracted a considerable number of patients; and some small additions to the original buildings were soon made.

The high purpose of the founders was shown by the fact that very soon after incorporating the enterprise, they surrendered all private interest in the earnings and devoted them to charitable uses; and ever since the institution has been conducted as a public philanthropy, sup-



ported by its earnings and by the contributions of its physicians and managers.

Reorganization on the Scientific Basis

During the first decade of its existence, after an encouraging beginning, the institution made but slow progress. In 1876 the present management took charge of the enterprise and a thorough reorganization was effected on a broad and scientific basis. The empirical methods of the old-fashioned water cure were superseded by rational hydrotherapy, and as rapidly as possible new methods, appliances, and apparatus were added, in the effort to create an institution which would show in practical operation all the resources of physiologic medicine.

The Birth of the "Sanitarium"

At that time there existed no institution in any way comparable to the model which the new management started out to create—an institution which should combine the comforts of the home and the hotel with the medical advantages of the hospital and the added facilities and equipment requisite for the administration of baths of every description, electricity in its different forms, medical gymnastics, and other curative means, with careful regulation of diet and living.



This new kind of institution demanded a new name. The original name of the water cure, Western Health Reform Institute, was too formidable and unappealing. Reference to the dictionary showed that the word "Sanatorium" was then in use in England to designate a health resort for invalid soldiers. A change of two letters transformed "Sanatorium" into "Sanitarium," and a new word was thus added to the language to designate the new institution which combined in one the home, the hotel, the hospital, and the health resort.

The various changes effected, including radical improvement in the equipment, the establishment of a training school for nurses, and the organization of a corps of scientifically trained physicians, rapidly won the confidence of both the medical profession and the public, so that within a few months one hundred patients were under treatment and the management began the erection of a building especially adapted to sanitarium work, the first of the kind, and capable of accommodating two hundred guests.

A Mecca for Health-Seekers

Within a year the new structure was dedicated (1878) and was at once filled to its utmost capacity. As a result of the efficient application of the new principles, Battle Creek soon came to be widely known as a Mecca



for health-seekers, who thronged the place in increasing numbers, summer and winter, until the number of patients and guests reached an aggregate of more than fifty thousand, with an annual total of six or seven thousand. To provide for these constant increases, new structures have been added, at intervals of four or five years, until the Sanitarium buildings now number some thirty in all, accommodating nearly a thousand patients and six or seven hundred employees.

This rapid increase in patronage was accompanied by a great expansion in scope, resources, scientific methods, and beneficent work. The financial success of the institution made it possible to improve the facilities for treatment very materially. The appliances and facilities for medical care and treatment were soon supplemented by research laboratories in which cases of disease were studied and original researches carried on for the purpose of determining the dietetic values and properties of foods, the effects of various baths, and the applications of light, electricity, massage and medical gymnastics.

In popular usage, the "Battle Creek Idea" has come to denote everything that the Battle Creek Sanitarium System involves; but more strictly speaking, the Battle Creek Idea means simply the philosophy or sound common sense underlying and guiding the Battle Creek Sanitarium methods.



The Philosophy of Getting Well

In these days, when prophets of healing are rising in every direction, when mind curists, magnetic healers and other layers on of hands, along with patent medicine fakirs and nostrum vendors, are fattening upon the gullibility of the public, it is essential that the invalid should obtain, if possible, a clearly defined idea of the nature of the healing process, so that he may be able to distinguish truth from falsehood and fact from humbug in so-called healing methods.

The fundamental principle of the Battle Creek Idea is that expressed by Dietl, a pupil of the famous German pathologist, Rokitanski: "Nature alone can cure: this is the highest law of practical medicine, and the one to which we must adhere. . . . Nature creates and maintains; she must therefore be able to cure."

The healing power is in the blood. It is the blood that heals, or rather, it is the creative power which formed the body and which repairs the waste created by the wear and tear of life. It is this same power which restores disordered functions and repairs damaged tissue. Physicians do not and cannot heal. Medicines, baths, and other so-called remedial measures are powerless to heal. All that physicians and remedies can do is to aid in removing causes of disease and supplying favorable conditions.



Physiological remedies, such as water, electricity, massage, exercise, sunlight, and regulation of diet and clothing, possess a wonderful controlling influence over the healing powers of the body by regulating the movements of the blood, the greatest of all remedial agencies; and by stimulating and controlling the vital activities by which the healing process is carried on.

The body is its own physician, or rather, the living, creative energy which dwells in every human being is the healer as well as creator of the body; the office of the physician or nurse is simply to cooperate with this healing power by the use of those agencies which scientific experiment and practical experience have shown to be most potent and permanently efficacious.

The Physiologic Method of Assisting Nature

The true remedies for disease, or rather the true aids to recovery, are those measures which are essential to the maintenance of health, for the body in disease is essentially the same as the body in health. Said the great Virchow, one of the most eminent of modern physicians: "Diseases are not entities that have entered into the body; they are not parasites that take root in the body; they merely show us the course of the vital processes under altered conditions."



In disease the body requires special assistance, but not different in kind from that which it receives in health. The means by which health is maintained are the most effective measures for recovering health when lost.

Nature has no "cure-alls," no "short cuts," no magical methods, no panaceas. Water, air, sunshine, heat, natural diet and natural living—these are the agents essential to the maintenance of vigorous, efficient life, and these are the agents which accomplish the most in the cure of disease. The use of these and other natural or physiological agents as remedies constitutes the physiologic method in the treatment of disease, or physiotherapy. By the aid of science, these measures have been rescued from empiricism and gradually organized into a complete rational system of therapeutics, as shown in practical operation at the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

Patients, Not Maladies, Must be Cured

The aim of the physiologic method is to cure patients, not diseases. Most chronic invalids have had their diseases cured many times by means of nostrums and medicines of various sorts; "dyspepsia cures," "kidney cures," and "liver cures" of every variety have been tried, but without avail. Nerves have been toned up by tonics and toned down by anodynes until they no longer respond to



medication. It is easy to cure pain by administering a narcotic or an anesthetic. Insomnia may be cured by a sleep-producing drug. But the pain cured by a narcotic returns as soon as the effect of the drug is gone, and sleeplessness cured by a hypnotic is followed by depression and increased insomnia.

Remedies which only cure symptoms usually make the patient worse in the end.

Most chronic ailments being due to wrong habits or unwholesome conditions of life, no cure can be permanent which does not correct these habits and conditions. Palliative drugs afford temporary relief, but they cannot cure.

A permanent cure requires a change in the patient, a regeneration of tissue, a complete body transformation, such as can be secured in no other way than by the physiologic method.

Attacking the Causes of Disease

The physiologic method concerns itself first of all with causes. In the case of chronic maladies, these will generally be found in erroneous habits of life, which, through long operation, have resulted in depreciation of the vital forces of the body and such derangement of the bodily functions that the natural defenses have been finally broken down and morbid conditions have been established.



It is not disease, then, but the causes of disease that must be attacked if a permanent cure is looked for.

As Hericourt, the eminent French physician, has so well pointed out, the man who is recognized to be suffering from chronic disease, even though the malady may be said to be in an incipient state, has really been ill for some time. The existence of chronic disease is evidence of the long-continued operation of subtle causes which have gradually consumed the patient's vital capital, wiped out his margin of safety, and established definite pathological conditions.

The Chronic Invalid Like a House on Fire

Chronic disease is like a fire in the walls of a house which has slowly worked its way from the foundation upward, until the flames have burst out through the roof. The appearance of the flame is the first outward indication of the mischief which has been going on; but it is not the beginning. It is rather the end of the destructive process.

Thousands of men and women who look well, feel well, and suppose themselves to be well, have these hidden fires of chronic disease burning in the recesses of their bodies. They are quite unconscious of their danger. They have not the slightest suspicion of the lurking foe which is secretly consuming the very foundations of life.



It is only when the house is ruined that this insidious mischief is made manifest.

The longer the fire burns unchecked, the greater the damage done and the less possible will be complete restoration. If headed off in its early stages, a fire may be extinguished with comparative ease, and the work of repair will have more chance of success. By seeking out and removing, so far as possible, all recognizable causes of the consuming disease, the process may be finally stopped, and further destruction prevented. Then damaged tissues may be removed, and sound ones built in their places. Thus the sick man may be gradually brought back to a condition approaching the normal. Getting well involves reconstruction; the building of new organs, of a new body; the putting off of the old man of disease, and the putting on of the new man of health.

Rebuilding the Invalid

Reconstruction is the object at which the Sanitarium physician aims. The man who is chronically sick has something more than an assortment of bad symptoms. His functions are disordered, but back of this there is an abnormal, diseased condition of the tissues. There can be no chronic disease without deteriorative changes in the blood. From diseased blood come diseased tissues and



disordered actions, so the body itself must be changed. Blood, nerves, muscles, glands—all must be renewed and rebuilt.

By means of baths, massage, exercise, and other physiologic measures, the old tissues are broken down and the diseased residue carried away. By proper diet, carefully selected and adapted to each individual case, especially food which is of the most highly nourishing character and most easily digestible, and by the employment of all rational recuperative means, the building up of the new tissue is encouraged. The result is that the patient not only feels he is a new man, but actually is a new man. He has been given a new lease of life. He has been born again.

Raising a Crop of Health

An invalid is converted into a healthy man by essentially the same process as that by which a crop of corn is grown. The ground is prepared, the seed is sown, the crop is cultivated, and in due time the harvest comes. It generally requires three or four months to raise a substantial crop of health. Not infrequently wonderful results may be obtained in a much shorter time; sometimes a longer period is required; but, whether longer or shorter, the process is one of seed-sowing and growth, not of luck or magic.



Health is a development, a culture. It is not to be found on druggists' shelves. Health is too vital, too energetic and expansive, too strenuous, for any bottle to hold it. It is not owned as a monopoly by any locality. It cannot be cornered. Health cannot be bought, neither can it be obtained by any occult process.

The chronic invalid must grow out of disease into health. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In other words, disease is chiefly the result of wrong habits of life. We sow the seeds of disease and reap crops of sickness, just as the farmer sows grain and reaps a harvest of wheat or corn.

At Battle Creek the patient is impressed with the fact that his treatment necessarily requires, from the very outset, the exact regulation of all his habits and the establishment of natural conditions of life. The simple life and return to nature are ideals constantly held up before him. He must work out his own salvation; he must "cease to do evil and learn to do well;" he must cease to sow seeds of disease, and by every means in his power cultivate health.

He is thus made to understand that the successful treatment of his case is as much a matter of careful training as is the preparation of a boat crew or a fine trotting horse for a race.



A Highly Developed System of Health Training

The Battle Creek Sanitarium System is in reality simply a finely elaborated system of health training. This of course means much more than what is ordinarily known as health culture or health training. It involves not only the training of the muscles, but the training of the skin, the training of the stomach, of every important organ and function, out of morbid conditions into healthy ones.

The patient's breathing capacity must be increased, his feeble heart strengthened, his skin made more active, his muscles stronger, his nerve tone higher, his digestion more prompt, and his tissue activity greater. He must, in short, be made a healthy man. He must be made more vigorous, more vital, more resisting to disease, than before he was ill, in order to insure him against speedily becoming sick again. He must not only be cured, but trained to stay cured.

Nothing is so vitally important toward this end as the improvement of the quality of the blood. "The blood is the life." It is the blood which heals, just as it is the blood which builds, vitalizes, and creates within the body. Hence we must look for the best curative results to those agents which are most capable of improving the quality of the blood and controlling its distribution so as to bring the healing power of the blood to the part where it is needed.

The physiologic method is able to accomplish this in



cases in which all other methods fail. All that is necessary is that the patient shall have a sufficient amount of constitutional vigor in reserve to react or respond to the treatment.

Education for Health and Efficiency

While the patient's body is being trained out of disease into health, his mind is being educated and his habits reformed so that when once cured he may know how to keep himself in good condition and to maintain the highest degree of efficiency.

Why the Sanitarium Succeeds

The practice of the physiologic method requires, accordingly, a thorough knowledge of physiologic processes in general, and such an examination of each case as will make clear the nature and extent of each departure from the normal state; then the specific wants of each are considered and met by suitable measures, hydiatic, gymnastic, mechanical or medicinal, where required, and an appropriate regulation of the diet and regimen. With such precautions and such thoroughness of treatment, the success of the Sanitarium method is not difficult to account for.

Quite a large proportion of the invalids who visit the Sanitarium are of the most chronic and obstinate class,



and have previously visited many "springs" and health resorts. Almost every change brought temporary relief, but the root of the difficulty remains, and can only be eradicated by a careful and scientifically directed course of health culture, combined with the powerful reconstructive measures afforded by scientific hydrotherapy, electricity, massage, etc.

This is precisely the class of patients to whom a sanitarium ought to be best adapted. The temporary relief afforded by palliative means is no longer obtainable. Radical measures must be adopted; and for the successful employment of such means, a well organized institution, with its trained corps of attendants doing team work and its systematic regime, is indispensable.