

Horace Fletcher's Fast

Dec. 11, 1910.

Mr. Horace Fletcher,
Care Editor of Good Health,
Battle Creek, Mich.

My dear Mr. Fletcher,—It must have been a year and a half ago that we had our talk on the subject of fasting; you promised me that you would investigate it. I have only just seen the copy of the November Good Health, and discovered that you carried out your promise. There are some things in connection with your account about which I want to ask you.

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You say that you have come to agree with Dr. Kellogg, that autointoxication continues during the fast; and that your reason for this is that at the end of a couple of weeks you found yourself developing weakness, bad breath, coated tongue, etc. You broke your fast because these symptoms grew worse and worse. Now surely if a person is going to give a fair trial to the claims of the fasters, he should follow their instructions, and he should not proceed in opposition to their most important advice. You say that for four days you took no water, and that after that you took only a pint or so a day. In this you violated the leading injunction of every advocate of fasting with whose writings I am acquainted; I have read the books of Bernarr Macfadden, C. C. Haskell, and Dr. L. B. Hazzard, all of whom have treated scores and hundreds of patients by means of the fast, and all of whom are strenuous on the point that one should drink as much water as possible. I myself while fasting have taken at least a glass every hour. I believe that a very great deal of your trouble may have been caused by your procedure in this respect.

Another point which you do not mention is whether or not you took an enema during the fast. This is a very important point. It may very well be true that poisons are excreted into the intestinal tract, and that owing to lack of food they are re-absorbed; if we can aid nature by washing these poisons out at once, can we not overcome this difficulty? May not the reason for the non-success of your fast lie here?

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If it be true that the fast leads to constantly increasing autointoxication, how do you account for those phenomena which are summed up in the phrase, "the complete fast"? I personally do not advocate the complete fast; I only advocate the investigation of it. I have never taken one, but I have letters from many people who have taken them, and they are in agreement upon the point that there comes a time during the fast when the tongue clears, the breath becomes pure, and hunger manifests itself in unmistakable form. How can this possibly be true if Dr. Kellogg's explanation of the symptoms of fasting is correct? Would it not happen just to the contrary, would not the symptoms of autointoxication increase, until death through poisoning resulted?

Dr. Kellogg's argument is a very plausible one; for many years it sufficed to keep me from trying the experiment of the fast. I know that it has kept many other people. His claim is, in brief, that during the fast the body is living off its own tissue; that we are therefore meat-eaters, and even cannibals, while fasting. We are living on a kind of food which is over-rich in proteid, and which generates excessive quantities of uric acid, indican, etc. This, as I say, sounds plausible, but I found by actual experiment that the facts do not work out according to the theory. I myself have taken a week's fast recently, with perfect success. During this time I had not one particle of weakness or trouble of any sort. Perhaps it may be that my body was excreting undue amounts of uric acid and indican, but I did not know it, and it[Pg 146] did me no harm so far as I could discover. I am much less afraid of the consequences of living from my own body tissue, since I have tried for myself the experiment of living on the tissues of other animals.

I am trying to get at the truth about these questions, and I know that you are trying to do it also. For three years I did myself incalculable harm by accepting blindly statements that meat was the prime cause of autointoxication, together with other high proteid food. I lived on starches and sugars, grew pale and thin and chilly, and, as I was accustomed to phrase it, was never more than fifteen minutes ahead of a headache. I can give myself a headache at any time at present by two or three days of eating rice, potatoes, white flour, and sugar. Apparently I cannot give it to myself by eating any possible quantity of broiled lean beef. So far as I can make out, beef is the one article of diet which never does me any harm, no matter how much of it I eat. The same thing is true, apparently, with my little boy.

I wish you would tell me what you think about all this. I wish that I could induce you to try the experiment of fasting again with the use of the enema and the copious water drinking. Still more do I wish that you could be induced to try it with some people who need it—some people who are desperately ill, and who have not been able to get well by following the low proteid diet.

Sincerely,
Upton Sinclair.

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Norwich, Conn., U. S. A.
Dec. 23, 1910.

My dear Mr. Sinclair,—Your valued favor of the 14th inst. received enclosing copy of your letter to Horace Fletcher. I have read your letter to Mr. Fletcher with much interest, and I have also read Mr.

Fletcher's letter to Dr. Kellogg in Good Health.

I am so crowded with work that I cannot take the time to write you on this subject of Fasting as I would like. I have had nearly seventeen years' experience studying and practising the "no-breakfast plan and fasting for the cure of disease." I have followed the no-breakfast plan all that time without a single break, and I know it has been of exceedingly great value to me. It has also been my privilege and pleasure to advise in thousands of cases covering nearly all forms of disease, and where the Law of Fasting has been followed faithfully, there have always been splendid results.

Aside from the omission of the breakfast, I have fasted a great many times from one day to four weeks, and always the results have been beneficial. This could not have been the case if Dr. Kellogg's contention is correct, that autointoxication continues and increases during a fast. If his idea is correct on this point, instead of one improving and at last overcoming the disease entirely, there would not only be a continuation of the disease but an increase, and death would naturally result. Should autointoxication continue and increase while [Pg 148]one is fasting, the time would not come when the tongue would be clean and natural hunger manifest itself. On the contrary, there would be an increase of the coating on the tongue until death finally resulted.

I think if Mr. Fletcher had continued his fast until his tongue had become clean, which certainly would be the case, he would have written a very different letter. In the case of Mrs. Tarbox, whose letter I enclose, on the thirty-seventh day of her fast, her tongue was perfectly clean and she had natural hunger, and she was well on the way to recovery from the terrible cancerous growth and condition in which I found her. Since Mrs. Tarbox' cure, I have had several other cases of cancer cured through fasting. You will note the case of Mrs. Hobson, copy of whose letter I enclose, and the case of Mr. Davis is another very interesting case as well as that of Mrs. Osborne. These persons would not have been cured if autointoxication had been going on and increasing.

Dr. Dewey's contention I know to be true, that during a fast the heart, lungs, and brain are supported by the predigested food stored up in the body. These organs take the nourishment and not the poison, for during a fast the eliminating organs work to the very limit to force the poison out of every cell of the body, so that during a fast all the poison in the body is growing less every hour, and when it is all eliminated natural hunger manifests itself, the tongue is clean, and the patient is ready to build up and have a clean physical organism. [Pg 149]The use of the enema is exceedingly important during a fast. I believe that it hastens the cure at least twenty-five per cent, and perhaps more than that.

Mr. Fletcher's own letter is to my mind a refutation to Dr. Kellogg's claim as to the continuation and increase of autointoxication, for he tells the benefits that he has received during his fast of seventeen days, and those benefits would have been greatly increased if he had continued the fast until his tongue was clean. His sense of taste had become so refined by the fast that his food was more delicious than ever before, which showed that the refining process had been going on all through his body. Another benefit that he mentions is the lessening of his desire for sugar, that he is satisfied with the sugar sweet that is in the food itself, which is so much more healthful than the cane sugar. Another thing that he speaks of is the reduction in his weight, which he needed. I sincerely hope that Mr. Fletcher will fast again, and make it a complete fast, for I think he will have

a very different story to tell from what he tells in this letter.

Charles Courtney Haskell.

Dec. 28, 1910.

Dear Mr. Sinclair,—I have your letter of the 14th inst. and its enclosures.

To those who have carefully and scientifically undergone or advised the fast, the cause of the symptoms that Dr. Kellogg and all of the rest of us recognize as indicating self-poisoning, is readily [Pg 150] discovered to lie in the inability of the organs of elimination to promptly convey from the body the products of food supplied in excess of digestion. It is a conclusion that cannot be escaped that, when the refuse from broken-down tissue and from food ingested beyond the needs of the body is discharged into the intestines, and when means of removal are not at hand, re-absorption at once begins and continues until the canal is cleansed. Self-poisoning, autointoxication, ensues, and all of its symptoms were emphatically shown in the fast of seventeen days that Mr. Fletcher essayed. These results are also often observed when feeding is in progress, and in this connection I refer to an article written by Dr. Kellogg for Good Health in the summer of 1908. In it he says, "The writer's observations, extending over a considerable number of years, have brought him to the conclusion that the cases which are benefited by fasting are practically without exception cases of autointoxication, generally cases of intestinal autointoxication, though perhaps also including some cases of metabolic autointoxication." It seems to me that the Doctor has not made it quite clear just why, if the fast is the certain producer of the condition, he recommends it for the cure of the condition. Perhaps "similia similibus" or "the hair of the dog theory" is implanted in the Doctor's ego.

As we review the situation, covering in origin thousands and thousands of years of wrong living, the facts are patent. The processes of digestion and assimilation as functions have long since lost [Pg 151] natural expression. Drugs and heredity have created in them an inability to cope with their work without assistance, and have in many instances caused a positive cessation of normal action.

Dr. Kellogg would have us accept his dictum that the cause of loss of weight during the fast is to be found in the impoverished state of the blood, and in the fact that, food being denied, no up-building of tissue can occur. Can he explain in this manner the wasting of tissue in illness when food is regularly supplied? It should be readily understood that, in either instance, the process of elimination of decomposed excess food has at last become the predominant function of the diseased system. Fasting is the voluntary act that permits rapid accomplishment of the result; and disease itself is but Nature's attempt to cleanse and purify by means of elimination. The longer this thought is dwelt upon, and the more its details are verified by experiment, the stronger becomes the conviction that we are facing the truth of the matter.

When coated tongue, foul breath, and vertigo appear, whether feeding or fasting, hunger is absent. It must have disappeared many days before these signs became acute, although Nature's warnings did not fail of display. The sensation of hunger, the desire for food for the purpose of restoring cell life, is the human body's greatest natural safeguard. A sentinel of lower rank is the sense of taste,

which, however, like other outposts, often becomes debauched and valueless. But hunger never can be turned from its protecting task, and it cannot be stimulated into [\[Pg 152\]](#) action. Hunger is the one natural function that is incorruptible, for once abused it withdraws. Its deceptive counterpart, appetite, is the product of taste-stimulation, and, as Mr. Fletcher says, takes upon itself the guise of habit. Or, as expressed in the text of my book, "Appetite is craving; Hunger is desire. Craving is never satisfied; but Desire is relieved when Want is supplied. Eating without Hunger or pandering to Appetite at the expense of Digestion makes Disease inevitable."

Had real normal hunger been present when Mr. Fletcher broke his fast, the demand for food would have been so great and so insistent that no denial would have been tolerated. Mr. Fletcher states that he did not want food until he had tasted it,—a clear case of taste-stimulation or appetite. Even this was momentary and was but the expiring flame of taste relish left after seventeen days free from the progressive accumulation of excess food. Despite his care in the selection and the mastication of his food, Mr. Fletcher must still have continually eaten without hunger, and must, as a result, have stored within his system an unusual amount of material beyond the needs of his body. Had this not been true, he would not have exhibited the coated tongue, foul breath, and vertigo. Hunger would have been ever present, and it would have been impossible for him to fast.

My only comment upon the neglect of the enema that seems to have occurred in the conduct of Mr. Fletcher's fast is that it was a most vital [\[Pg 153\]](#) error. The enema is absolutely necessary. The question of diet also need not be discussed, for experience shows that the feeding of the body is a matter of individual requirement. If normal physical balance be ever reached, fixed laws to govern the diet problem could be formulated. In its present state, argument resolves itself into mere utterances of individual opinion and prejudice.