

A Letter to the New York Times

(unfit to print)

Arden, Del., May 31, 1910.

Editor of the Times, New York City,

Dear Sir,—Some time ago your news columns contained a despatch to the effect that three[Pg 35] young ladies in Garden City, Long Island, were undertaking a three days' fast as a result of reading a magazine article recommending this measure. In your editorial referring to this despatch, you say that the ladies are "the victims of a shallow and unscrupulous sensationalist." As I am the writer of the magazine article in question, I presume that this means me. I did not intend to make any reply to the remark, as I figure that I must have long ago lost whatever reputation could be taken from me by newspaper comments. Thinking the matter over, however, I concluded that I would venture a mild protest, not on my own account, but for the sake of the important discovery of which I told in the article in question.

It is one of the privileges incidental to owning a newspaper that one can call other people names with impunity, and can always have the last word in any argument. Will, however, your sense of fair play give me the privilege of asking you to state just what you meant by the slur in question? In the magazine article I stated that I had taken several fasts of ten or twelve days' duration, with the result of a complete making over of my health. I presume that the writer of the editorial had read the article before he condemned it. Am I to understand that he got from the article the impression that I was telling lies, and that I had never really taken the fasts as I said I had taken them? Or was it his idea that I exaggerated the benefits derived therefrom, in order to make "victims" of the three young ladies in Garden City?

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I might say that I took the fasts in question in an institution where hundreds of people were fasting anywhere from three to fifty days; that during the entire time I was under the observation of many people; my weight was taken regularly every day, and all the symptoms which I described were observed by physicians and friends. May I also call attention to the fact that I published in the article two photographs, one of which was taken four years ago, and the other of which was taken

after the fasting treatment? The contrast between these two photographs was sufficiently striking, it seems to me, to impress anyone. May I also call attention to the fact that the article was found of sufficient interest to be published in one of the most representative of the English monthlies, the Contemporary Review? Also that the Contemporary Review appended to the article the testimony of half a dozen people whose cases I had myself observed, and whose letters I have in my possession?

I fully recognize the fact that many of the things for which I stand as a writer are abhorrent to you, but surely that is no reason for condemning recklessly and blindly an important discovery concerning human health, simply because I happen to be the person who is telling about it. Setting aside all personalities, and simply in the interest of the discovery in question, I respectfully invite you to make an investigation of the claims which I have set forth in that article. Let me give you the names of some people who have fasted either under my direction or in my presence, and who [Pg 37] will tell a representative of your paper of the results it has brought to them. I can tell you of a dozen such people. Also, perhaps by way of preliminary, you might be willing to publish as an appendix to this letter of mine the communication from another of my "victims," omitting the name of the writer unless you obtain permission to use it.

Yours truly,
Upton Sinclair.

Appended to the above was the letter which the reader will find in the Appendix, page 111. The Times did not publish this letter, nor did it pay any attention to several letters of protest which followed. I leave it to the reader to judge whether the silence of the paper was one of dignity or of fear. The following despatch from the New York World of May 17, 1910, records the experiences of the Garden City ladies, and makes clear how much in need of sympathy my "victims" were.

All three of the young women are in rare spirits. They have gone about their usual occupations and recreations, and Mrs. Trask found time yesterday to talk about the single tax in the course of a conversation that had to do primarily with her newer interest.

"We are getting the most extraordinary number of letters about this adventure of ours," Mrs.[Pg 38] Trask said. "They began to come the first day, and to-day there were lots of them. They come from some of the most unexpected places and they contain some of the most unexpected things.

"What most astonishes me is that of all those who write to tell us that they have tried just what we are doing, not one has told us of a failure. There isn't any reason why they shouldn't write to say that we are foolish and that we can't hope to gain what we want, but dozens of them have reiterated the promise that we'll never regret having made our experiment.

"One New York woman told us something that we had wondered about more than once. Her husband had suffered greatly from rheumatism, and finally he tried fasting. Not dieting like ourselves, but fasting. He went without food of any kind, she said, for nineteen days. He kept on at his work, too, which was the thing we had been wondering about.

"We've heard from another physician, too. He lives in Boston and has made a specialty of dietetics. He warned us not to stick too closely to milk, because we'd find that after a day or two it would quit being of the service it had been at first. People we never heard of tell us that thus and so was their experience, and when we measure our own discoveries beside theirs we find new and convincing evidence that we picked the true way to the end we hoped to reach.

"I know that for myself I'll have reason to be grateful always that I took this up. We have been greatly benefited."

FOOTNOTE:

[\[1\]](#) The first two of these, Edmond Kelly and Ben Hanford, have since died.