

Are Suffragette Hunger Strikes Really a Hardship

- NO! Says Prof. A. J. CARLSON

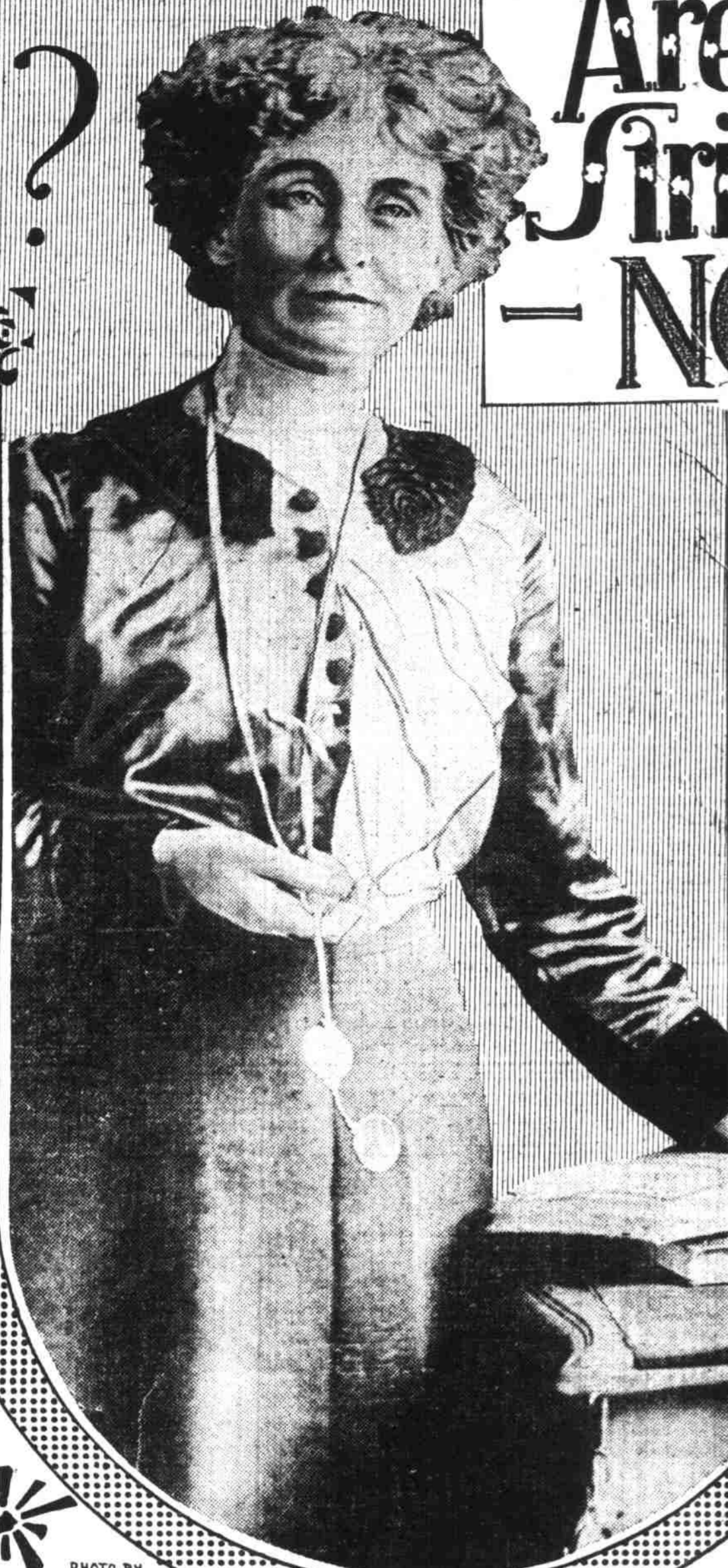


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I HAVE long been familiar with, but not particularly impressed by, the enthusiasts who advocate starvation as a panacea for various ills. But this personal experience (five days of starvation) leads me to suspect that there is more value in some of these measures than is ordinarily considered.

Civilized man has traveled far from the conditions of life among wild animals and primitive man, with whom enforced starvation was not uncommon. Occasional periods of starvation, say once or twice a year, in the case of healthy adult persons, may not only add to the joy of living but also to the length of life.

Voluntary starvation, like the so-called "hunger strikes" of our militant English sisters, does not entail real martyrdom. Of this I am quite certain. During my entire starvation period the hunger sensation was strong enough to cause some discomfort, but not to a degree that could be called pain or suffering. —PROF. CARLSON.

That citation of hunger experiments on animals in the interest of science as instances of cruelty to animals is without foundation.

The University of Chicago physiologist and his assistant performed their experiments with the aid of a rubber balloon adjusted to a flexible rubber tubing. The gastric contractions were recorded by means of bromoform or chloroform manometers. Each contraction on the balloon, which was swallowed, was registered by a sharp-pointed needle on smoke-glazed paper. If the stomach muscles contracted on the balloon the manometer float rose in proportion to the strength of contraction, and if the muscles relaxed the float descended.

During the five days' starvation period the two men continued their usual work during the day, and records of the stomach tonus and hunger contractions were taken at varying intervals. During the night continuous records were taken, beginning 8 to 9 p. m., and ending 5 to 6 a. m. Neither Professor Carlson nor his assistant found much difficulty in sleeping from six to eight hours every night with the balloon and the tube in the stomach. The room was kept dark except for a feeble light focused on the drum so as to enable careful reading of the record.

"I, as well as my assistant, continued in good health and in fairly good spirit throughout the starvation period," said Professor Carlson. "On the fourth and fifth day we both felt somewhat weak. Some mental depression was also experienced, especially by the assistant on the fifth day. He complained of feeling dizzy on getting on his feet after lying down. An hour's lecturing seemed quite an effort on the fourth starvation day, and on the fifth day we both felt distinctly better when lying down than when sitting or standing.

"Both of us slept fairly well during the four nights of the starvation period, despite the persistent hunger contractions and the unusual surroundings of the research laboratory as a sleeping-room. In some cases a glass of water was taken to diminish the hunger pangs. I did not enjoy my cigar after the second day; in fact, smoking tended to produce nausea.

"The sensation of hunger was almost continuous after the first day of starva-

tion. On the fifth day the continuous hunger sensation seemed to be tinged with a peculiar 'burning' sensation, also referred to the stomach, the fusion resembling somewhat the feeling of 'sick stomach,' with its attendant central depression. The appetite during the starvation period ran practically parallel with the sensation of hunger. It was distinctly increased the first two or three days, and diminished on the fourth and fifth days. In fact, the depression of appetite on these two days seemed distinctly greater than the depression of the hunger sensation. Instead of an eagerness for food, there was almost an indifference toward food, despite the persistent hunger call of the empty stomach.

"I am inclined to believe that the weakening of the hunger and the appetite sensations toward the end of the period was due to a depression of the central nervous system. Both in the case of my assistant and myself practically all the mental depression and some of the feeling of weakness disappeared during the partaking of the first meal after the fasting period. But complete recovery from the bodily weakness did not take place till the second or third day after breaking the fast.

"From the third day on we felt unusually well, distinctly better, in fact, than before the hunger period, although we are normally in good health and vigor and not hampered by excessive fat.

How They Felt.

"I FELT AS IF I HAD HAD A MONTH'S VACATION IN THE MOUNTAINS. My mind was unusually clear and a greater amount of mental and physical work was accomplished without fatigue. I am 38 years old, but the five days' starvation period increased the vigor of the gastric hunger contractions to that of a young man of 20 or 25, and the empty stomach retained this increased vigor for at least three weeks after the hunger period, when observations were discontinued.

"Neither my assistant nor myself can be considered as ordinarily eating to excess, though the daily intake of protein and total calories are greater than the minimum requirement advocated by Chittenden. The cause of the improvement was not loss of excessive adipose tissue.

"My assistant states that the augmentation of hunger and appetite persisted at least for two or three weeks after the end of the starvation period."

Now to tell you what Professor Carlson thinks of fasting:

"I have long been familiar with, but not particularly impressed by, the enthusiasts who advocate starvation as a panacea for various ills. But this personal experience leads me to suspect that there is more value in some of these measures than is ordinarily considered. Civilized man has



Above is Miss Christabel Pankhurst, and Below an Artist's Conception of Compulsory Starvation, Which, Professor Carlson Says, Is Complicated by Exposure, Fear and Panic, So Hunger Sensation Cannot Be Determined.

traveled far from the conditions of life among wild animals and primitive man, with whom periods of enforced starvation were not uncommon. Occasional periods of starvation, say once or twice a year, in the case of healthy adult persons, may not

only add to the joy of living, but also to the length of life.

"Voluntary starvation, like the so-called 'hunger strikes' of our militant English sisters, does not entail real martyrdom. Of this I am quite certain. During my entire starvation period the hunger sensation was strong enough to cause some discomfort, but not to a degree that could be called marked pain or suffering. The discomfort was at no time sufficient to interfere seriously with work. And since practically all observers agree that the hunger discomfort is greatest during the first few days of starvation, it seems probable that our first five days' starvation period gave us a taste of the maximum discomfort that would be experienced in more protracted fasts.

"Accounts of acute sufferings from mere starvation, water being at all times available, must therefore be wholly imaginary, or the result of fear or panic. Voluntary starvation is in no sense a heroic act, and citations of hunger experiments on animals in the interest of science as instances of cruelty to animals is without foundation."

Professor Carlson added that all cases of compulsory starvation, as in cases of persons shipwrecked, explorers and hunters lost or cut off from supplies, are usually complicated by lack of water, by the effects of exposure and by fear, panic, etc., so that the state of actual hunger sensation cannot be determined.



Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, Who Frequently Has Undergone Voluntary Starvation. "The So-Called 'Hunger Strikes' of Our Militant English Sisters Do Not Entail Real Martyrdom," Says Professor Carlson.



HAT is hunger?

The nature of hunger was in doubt until recently, when experiments by Professor A. J. Carlson of the University of Chicago proved conclusively

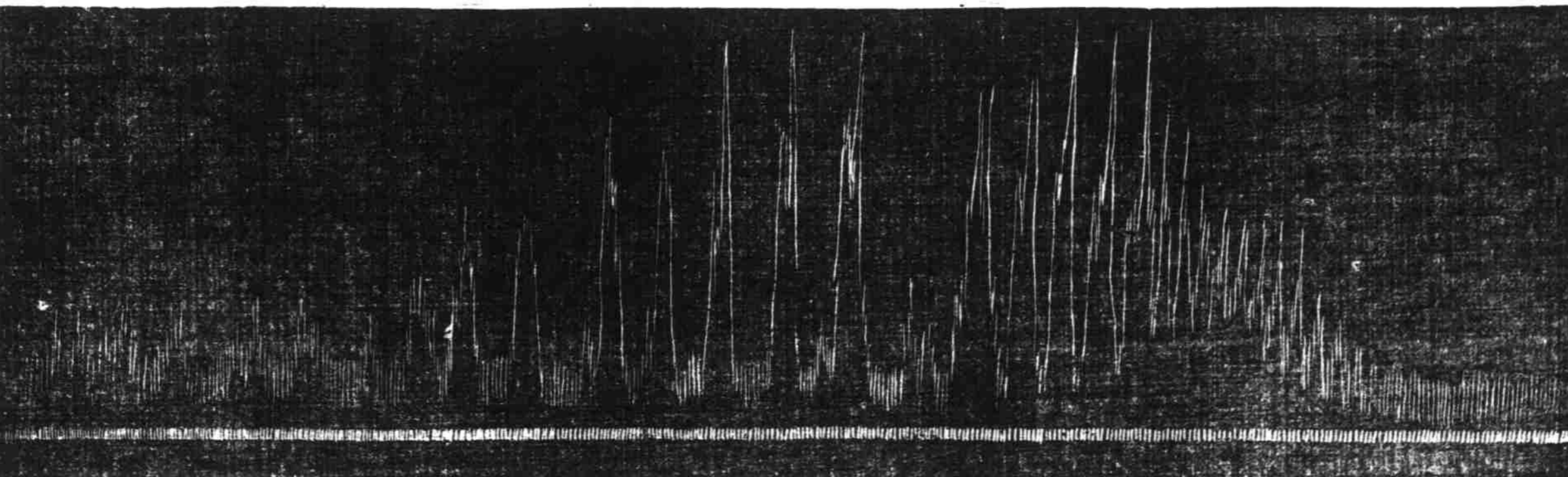
that the sensations of hunger pangs are due to vigorous contractions of the empty stomach.

Apart from scientific and medicinal discussion the average man likes to know what it really is that urges him to take his three square meals a day (if he can get them). So you see three things prompted Professor Carlson to investigate the control of the hunger mechanism by a five-day fast.

Prolonged starvation is nothing new to science or human experience—and the accounts of subjective sensations as a consequence of prolonged starvation are very divergent. On the one hand some people have claimed that all desire for food, all hunger sensations, disappear after three or four days of starvation, while others claim that death from starvation is most excruciating.

New Light on "Starving."

Neither of these statements is true, according to Professor Carlson, who also declares that the starvation period served to make him believe:



Each Stomach Contraction on the Balloon, Which Was Swallowed, Was Registered by a Sharp-Pointed Needle on Smoke-Glazed Paper, as Shown Above. As Will Be Noted, the Hunger Sensations Were Weak at the Beginning and End of the Fast, but Strong During the Middle. The Needle Rose Up in Proportion to the Strength of Contraction.