

THE BOYCOTT ON 'THE JUNGLE'

Upton Sinclair's Book in Trouble in the Packing Centres.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

A few weeks ago, when the Chicago newspapers reported that President Roosevelt had begun an investigation to determine the truth or falsity of the charges which I have made concerning conditions in the meat-packing industry, the Trustees of the public library of Chicago suddenly discovered that "The Jungle" was a book unfit for circulation, and ordered it removed from their shelves. And now I have just received information that the librarians of the St. Louis Public Library have reached the same conclusion and taken the same step. This information comes to me in an editorial from The St. Louis Mirror, which incidentally declares its opinion that "the suppression of 'The Jungle' is an intolerable piece of censoring."

Now, I share this hard fate in good company, and I am aware of the incidental advantages which it brings to my book; and am not sufficiently hypocritical to pretend that I am at all grieved over this abuse of authority. I cannot, however, help noticing the peculiar circumstance—that the only two places in the country which have found "The Jungle" unfit for circulation are large and important centres of the packing industry! I have just returned from a visit to a city not far from Chicago, where I was told by the literary editor of a leading newspaper that he had positive knowledge of the fact that the editor in chief of the paper had been diplomatically approached by the packers and requested not to notice my book. And I wonder whether it could have been any such influence as this which brought about the decision of the library authorities of Chicago and St. Louis!

I am told by Miss Alice Lakey of the National Consumers' League that she was informed by a prominent provision jobber of New York that since the publication of "The Jungle" the canned-meat trade had dropped off 17 per cent.; and in a letter just received from Mr. William McDevitt, an editor, of Oakland, Cal., I am told that the Relief Committee of that city turned over a lot of beef, locally known as "Jungle beef," and that "many a hungry fellow—hungry for meat—preferred to pass that beef whenever he heard the word 'Jungle.'"

I wonder if it could have been such facts as these, judiciously mentioned during a friendly conversation at the club, which caused the exceptionally sensitive state of the moral sensibilities of the library authorities of the two great packing centres? Only a few weeks ago a high official of one of the Beef Trust firms called upon the publishers of "The Jungle" and in a perfectly courteous and diplomatic way conveyed the information that the stories which I had told in the book were being copied by the Agrarian papers of Germany and were being translated into half a dozen languages upon the Continent, to the incalculable detriment of a great American industry! And I cannot help wondering what would have been the effect of a similar statement upon library authorities who were dependent for their endowment upon a City Government which was financed and controlled by the packing house in question!

Also, while I am writing a letter, will you allow me to call attention to the fact that the challenge which I recently addressed to Mr. J. Ogden Armour, and which you were so good as to notice in your editorial columns, with the suggestion that Mr. Armour might do well to reply thereto, has not been replied to and that the subject is left exactly where it was before my revelations were made? Will you also allow me space to state that the newspaper report (which emanated from Chicago and has been reprinted all over the country) to the effect that President Roosevelt had begun his investigations as to conditions in Packingtown in order to disprove "The Jungle" and to get material for an attack upon its author is false; as also the further statement that his Commissioners had reported to him that the book consisted of 95 per cent. lies is false and unwarranted in every particular, as I happen to know upon as good authority as can be imagined under the somewhat delicate circumstances.

UPTON SINCLAIR.

Princeton, N. J., May 17, 1906.