# FROM WEEK TO WEEK

*"Spectator's" Discussion of Topics of Interest to Churchmen*

THE tragedy at Sandwich calls for a few dispassionate comments in the interests of justice in this particular incident and the whole administration of law throughout the country. The manifest loosening of the public conscience on the matter of crime in recent years is a very uncomfortable subject to contemplate. It is easy for us to attribute these things to the influences of war, and to comfort ourselves with the thought that it has always been so, and let it go at that. The assumption is that things will right themselves in a few years, and in the meantime, why worry? Let us not forget that this war was entirely different from any war that preceded it. The rank and file of our citizenhood had far more to say in its conduct and conclusion than ever before. The shaping of our government and the standards of life are in a much greater degree in the hands of the ordinary citizen now than at any other time in history. We thought we had learned many lessons about effective warfare in South Africa, but their usefulness evaporated when this great war commenced. Let us take heed lest our calculations so comfortably assumed regarding the early subsidence of post-war irregularities will follow the old paths when everything else has departed from them. The one hope in exalting law once more in the national and domestic life lies in our determination to be just in our justice.

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Let us assume that along the border cities of Ontario there is intense and bitter feeling between those who break and those who uphold the law. One may not perhaps expect that fairness of judgment or that detached attitude to justice that belongs to reasonable men under ordinary circumstances. In this case, however, the border cities do not constitute the whole of Canada, and the people of Canada are very much interested in the incident in question. In dealing, therefore, with the Chappell Hotel tragedy, the authorities involved have to think not only of the effect of their actions on the residents along the Detroit River, but their effect in bringing respect or contempt upon the administration of justice throughout the province and the whole Dominion. Let the writer attempt to interpret public opinion as he finds it among men who are in no way involved in this case. They are not carried away with any undue prejudice against the Ontario Act, neither have they any sympathy with men who knowingly violate the stipulations of a statute. They simply want to be fair to those who are carrying out a difficult and distasteful duty, but they are men enough to desire that even the lowest criminal should have a square deal. They are not presuming to pass judgment on the case in question or to condemn any one, but they do feel that the verdict of a coroner's jury under the circumstances is not and should not be a final pronouncement on so serious a matter. It leaves an uncomfortable conviction that the taking of a life, whether lawfully or unlawfully, has been dealt with in a far too summary and cavalier a manner. Even though we praise the noble deeds of the slayer and blacken the character of the slain, nevertheless society, to retain its self-respect, owes justice to the scoundrel as well as to the saint.

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What are the causes of this rising feeling of discontent among men who desire only a right judgment in this and all other matters? In the first place they are not absolutely sure that the man that was slain was armed with a dangerous weapon. There were half a dozen witnesses at least and the enquiry followed in a few hours, and yet this point was not established beyond a peradventure. No such arm has been found. In the second place, even if he were armed, men not directly interested cannot bring themselves with ease to believe that the license inspector in this case was really in danger of his life. Here was a man in his own home. His wife and children were there also. So were a number of his friends, and those who were not friends. Under such circumstances a violent threat by no means involves execution. A masked brigand making such a threat would be quite a different matter. Even assuming justification for shooting it should be formally and judicially established else we are sanctioning reprisals for every threat of violence. Such a course may have a very serious effect upon all our police forces.

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Murmurs are heard in many quarters that our M.S.C.C. Board is not organized on a very satisfactory basis. The trouble seems to arise not so much from the organism as from the method of its operation. There is a large representative body, with all the Bishops, two clerical and two lay delegates from each diocese constituting its personnel. This is the Board of Management, which meets once a year. A smaller executive is elected annually to carry on the business, and meets every three months. Sub-committees of the Executive are appointed from time to time for special purposes. Unless the greatest care is taken the whole business of the Society may be carried on by the Executive, and the larger body becomes a mere cypher to confirm its actions. This is the complaint that "Spectator" hears from all three orders. "If you are not on the Executive what on earth is the use of being a member of the Board?" is asked. There is no enlightening information regarding the meetings of the Executive printed and sent to the members of the Board. That is supposed to be too expensive. There is really no adequate opportunity at the annual Board meeting for private members to get a directing grip on the business before them, for they are assured that time is too short, and besides all those things have been threshed out by the Executive. "You must trust your Executive." Members of the Board return from Halifax or Winnipeg, having travelled across a continent and ask, "What is the use. We might as well be rubber stamps." There are few things more irritating for men of ideas and good will than to suppose that they have a responsible position in the formation and direction of the policy of the Church and then find that they are thought to be asking foolish questions and delaying the business that has been competently done by men of their own appointment. A hundred dollars a year in printing, or an extra day annually spent in informing and drawing forth the wisdom of the Board would correct all this. It is either that or delete the Board altogether. The greatest waste of time and money is to bring men together from the ends of the Dominion just to ratify what they do not understand.

"Spectator."

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Complaining is Cain-like in its attributes, though too cowardly to expose itself to the deeds of Cain: only its words are murderous.