

Correspondence.

TRIAL BY NEWSPAPER.

To the Editor, CANADA LAW JOURNAL:

DEAR SIR,—The modern practice of the daily press with regard to criminal cases in which strong public interest is taken has long since disgusted all who desire to have justice impartially and dispassionately administered.

The Thaw case was a striking illustration of this abominable tendency to poison the minds of average citizens—from whose ranks, of course, jurymen must be selected—and as an almost inevitable consequence to have prisoners tried not on the evidence given in Court, but on purely sentimental grounds advanced by sensational journalists. The second trial of Thaw generated another irruption of newspaper sensationalism. This kind of thing is now so common that it is probably impossible to stop it.

Numerous instances might be given of the shameless manner in which daily papers lead by their clamorous and indecent comments to verdicts which can scarcely be regarded as just or reasonable. The trial of a young Italian girl more than a year ago for the murder of her uncle and aunt was reported with "realistic" effects at such length and with such descriptive appendages calculated to influence public opinion that the jury, if they saw any of the public prints, had no alternative save to acquit the accused. These "reports"—if such they can be called—not only pollute the fountain of justice, but gratify those instincts of prurient curiosity which are only too keen amongst a certain depraved portion of every community.

Again the trial of Mrs. Bradley for the murder of Senator Brown was reported in the same "sensational" or "realistic" fashion as was the Thaw case. The lady was acquitted, though plain evidence of homicide was given, and, whatever may have been her wrongs, she could not have been exonerated from the charge of killing a man with the utmost deliberation. If newspapers continue to practice this system of sensational report-