

## FROM WEEK TO WEEK

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

There seem to be indications that the effort to increase the attendance of men at church for a given period is meeting with a fair measure of success. It is presumably better to have men pledged to seek the sanctuary once a Sunday for a month or more than not to have them there at all. It is, however, only a temporary and fugitive contract. The vital question with those who have adopted this method is to so present the Church, within that limited period, that they who have been moved to attendance by persuasion may continue from choice. Let us assume that our churches will be crowded with men hitherto negligent and ill-informed in their Churchmanship and discipleship with the Master. There is no guarantee of their presence beyond the terms of their pledge, unless something happens in the meantime. What is the most useful instruction that can be given in that brief period that will be faithful to truth and fruitful in convincing them that the Church of God is a vital factor in their own richer, fuller lives and the lives of all men? If they have hitherto been kept away from church by reasons that can be met, will we meet them and dispel the illusion? Our form of worship is fixed. It is not in our power to adapt the Church services in any marked degree to what may be deemed a desirable greeting for these men. The one opportunity open to the clergy is the character and quality of the sermon. What shall be the subject matter of these sermons? For those who know exactly what men want, what they are hungering and thirsting for, now is their opportunity. A successful result will be of the highest value to all who are seriously striving to promote the Kingdom of God.

What a disagreeable word "reprisals" is. The idea behind it is being deplored and reprobated in the British Isles at the present time, but chiefly by two classes, those who are having a dose of their own medicine and those who are cool and unscathed in other parts of the United Kingdom, "far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife." The position of one set of people is that it is a virtue to shoot, but it is a crime to be shot. The position of the other set of people is that it is hard luck to be shot, but it is positively villainous to shoot. And there you are. The British government has been long suffering with Ireland, yes, beyond the bounds of all reason. She has held her hand while her most loyal citizens have been foully murdered in cold blood by cowardly fanatics. The whole world is looking on at this terrible turmoil and for the sake of the impression upon foreigners this miserable slaughter of innocent citizens and devoted servants is not stayed. It is hoped that when it has proceeded far enough the world will be convinced that nothing but a violent application of force will remedy the shameful deeds of traitors. Is it within the bounds of human nature for these hunted and harried men and women to submit themselves as arguments to convince the Hearsts, the de Valeras and the Crawfords that they have some right to protection. Their only crime is steadfastness in their allegiance to their king and to their citizenship. Must they meekly stand with bared breasts to receive the bullets of assassins, who fall upon them in the dead of the night or spring up from behind a

hedge and with merciless brutality do them to death in the presence of their children? It is all very well for people in comfortable homes to offer the counsel of a meek and lofty spirit, but let them think of themselves under similar circumstances. Think of their houses and barns destroyed, their relatives slain and cast into the ditch like dogs, think of their cattle, innocent of all blame, hacked and hewn by devils incarnate, and finally, think of the arm of justice stayed from protecting them lest the foreigner rage and the ignorant imagine vain things. Would they do nothing to protect ourselves? If friends hold back for political reasons, shall we lift up our hands in pious horror at men taking matters into their own hands to apply the one argument that seems to be understood by such ruffians? Such an attitude brings contempt from the traitor and derision from the foreigner. We had the same outcry when we retaliated with gas and air raids in warfare. Surely the life of a good citizen is as precious as that of an enemy, that knows neither pity nor fair play. The only way to prevent lawless reprisals is to enforce lawful protection. Throw down the gauntlet to the nations of the world, and let us set in order our own household with justice and judgment, and without fear.

Let us keep our eyes on the Roman Catholic Church that is in the midst of all this furore in Ireland, or looking on from the ends of the earth. Let us listen for the word of conciliation, the word of reason, the word of human pity, on behalf of the officers of the law discharging their duty, and slain for no other reason than that they are doing their duty as honorable men. Let us watch for the counsel of restraint, for the urging that men come together and settle their difficulties as reasonable beings. Let us take note of the blessings outpoured upon murderers and the closing of the gates of heaven to those who have fallen at the hands of those whom they bless. Let us follow the Church's priests and prelates in the conventicles that plan the heinous crimes against civilization and justice and find out whether they are on the side of mercy or of murder. An occasional outcry of apparent horror may be heard, uttered under dramatic circumstances, but it fades away into the void and is no more. It lacks the ring of frankness and sincerity, for things go on as before and the cry is not repeated, nor are any risks in ecclesiastical standing assumed. Slapping the wrist of a brigand at strategic intervals will not do. A Church that speaks in the very name of Christ and is clothed with all His authority cannot meet its responsibilities in any such manner. The government calls upon men of influence to come forward and seek in council a solution of this wretched business, but the Church that is all powerful over her people answers not. The Church of Rome is bearing a heavy responsibility these days and the time is coming when reasonable men, within and without, will demand an accounting.

"Spectator."

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Silence never shows itself to so great an advantage as when it is made the reply to calumny and defamation, provided that we give no just occasion for them.—Addison.



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