

NEW ADDRESS: Rt. 7, Frederick, Md. 21701

Mr. John Sparrow,  
The Warden's Lodgings  
All Souls College,  
Oxford, England

Dear Mr. Sparrow,

I fear I have "bungled" again. I was away when your great condescension of February 1 arrived. I trust that with the great generosity so characteristic of your writing, you will forgive this egregious fault.

If Mr. Crook got nothing else for whatever he paid you for that classic monument to the debasement of the intellect and defamation of scholarship, he certainly got a defender. My, the detail with which you explain his actions and decisions. It makes me wonder if you assist him in the bathroom!

I can well imagine the great anxiety he and you had to print my first letter, so great you underscore the words. Likewise, I can well imagine how ignorant the London Times is of what appears as a major article in a sister publication (there certainly is nothing manly in what I have seen, hence "sister"). But for your "genuine regrets" I am in your debt, if for nothing else.

The practice in your country is one with which I am not familiar. In this blighted land, however, it is the accepted prerogative of editors to edit letters. Otherwise, none could be printed. I can hardly believe your papers can publish letters-to-the-editors on any other basis.

Perhaps, so you can better enjoy what you have accomplished, I had first better confess that I thought the supplement a subsidiary of the Sunday Times, rather than its weak sister. I was, at the time your desecration of truth appeared, in New Orleans. I was informed of it by the New York Times, which phoned me. You will undoubtedly be happy to know it printed your diatribe without comment from those you slandered, its own kind of tribute to decent journalism, and distributed it very widely. Here there was no "bungling", only what you intended. One of the blessings of my life is that I live in the country, far removed from those mis-called "intellectuals". The consequence is that no copy of Mr. Crook's paper was available and my boundless ignorance led me to address the Sunday Times. (Again I confess incredulity that its editor was unaware of Mr. Crook and your opus.)

How utterly generous of even you to acknowledge that Mr. Roche's letter is "very weak". But if Mr. Crook is as uninformed on this subject-important enough to him to devote such great space to it- does he not have an instant expert in you? Or did you not read the Roche letter in advance of publication? Is it presuming, too much to assume you knew that Mr. Kennedy was completely detached from the investigation?

But now both you and Mr. Crook know that this letter is, indeed, an attempted political assassination, that the "dearly beloved brother", indeed, had nothing to do with the investigation of the murder hence, contrary to Roche and the incumbent President, cannot be held accountable for its defects. Have you, on your own not inconsiderable authority, written a letter, not a "bungling" one

like mine, but a scholarly one, like all of yours? You apparently are intimate enough to speak for Mr. Crook. Are you not intimate enough to speak to him and correct this great slander upon a man who has been touched too much by the tragedy already? Or are you, too, anxiously awaiting his political assassination when the monster of the Report turns?

May I note, also, that our own bumpkin editors do take the responsibility of noting greivous errors in the communications they print? Am I to assume that in England they knowingly print falsehood, without any comment (from the appearance of your work I take it this happens outside the letters columns, but I here address myself solely to these departments)?

To answer the question of your last paragraph: the publisher is Collins. My then agent was the Baroness Laura Budberg. If I have been misinformed, I will be happy to hear this from you and encourage you to correct me to Mr. Crook. My information was quite specific, with comment quoted. As you realize, I was not there in person.

It is a typical literary coward's device to say "You will not wish or expect me to answer the extravagant charges you make against me..." For what other purpose, sirrah, do you think I made them? You do not because you cannot. If you have any influence with Mr. Crook, I am supremely confident that you would use it to prevent my writing an answer to you. It is a disgrace that a man so uninformed and undeformed, or so deliberately wrong, can and does get the wide presentation of misinformation granted you, the uninhibited defamstion so farflung, without recourse to the injured. In our country, blighted as it is, I would be willing to challenge you in the courts for that rotten, degenerate smear you spewed in attributing Joesten's suspicions of the involvement of the President's secretary in the conspiracy. No man of minimal honesty or comprehension could with even a diseased imagination read that into any of my writing.

But since you, with the great tolerance of your exalted position and reputation, have deigned to "set (me)right on one or two points," if that, indeed, is what you did, please make me a single additional demonstration of your great tolerance and patience and give me the name of the female clerk at Greener's gun shop and cite the testimony you quoted from her, by its reference in the volume in which she appears.

Until you do, I suspect we will well understand each other.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg