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June 13, 1989

Earwitness to Campaign Slymouth; Buchan the Source?

To the Editor:

With regard to your Topics item of June 1: I would like to quote the following from John Buchan's "The Three Hostages" (Houghton Mifflin, 1925). The speaker is Sandy Arbuthnot. "I might be bored in Parliament," he reflected, "but I should love the rough-and-tumble of an election. I only once took part in one, and I discovered surprising gifts as a demagogue, and made a speech in our little town which is still talked about. The chief row was about Irish home rule, and I thought I'd better have a whack at the Pope. Has it ever struck you, Dick, that ecclesiastical language has a most sinister sound? I knew some of the words, though not their meaning, but I knew my audience would be just as ignorant. So I had a magnificent peroration. 'Will you, men of Kilclavers,' I asked, 'endure to see a chasuble set up in your marketplace? Will you have your daughters sold into simony? Will you have celibacy practised in the public streets?' Gad, I had them all on their feet bellowing 'Never!' "

I had thought Buchan was only funning, and had no idea someone adapted the idea to modern use. Life plagiarizing art? BLANCA DEL RIO New York, June 2, 1989

Drawing

