

THE LAW MUST BE ENFORCED*

I DO not deal with public sentiment. I deal with the law. How I might act as a legislator or what kind of legislation I should advise has no bearing on my conduct as an executive officer charged with administering the law. I shall try to procure the enforcement of the Sunday Closing Law, not by spurts, but with steadily increasing rigor. If it proves impossible to enforce it, it will only be after the experiment of breaking many a captain of the police in the endeavor to secure the enforcement has first been tried.

With the new magistrates and with the excise board working as it is, I feel that there is a good chance to stop the lawbreaking. In any event the police have got to strain every nerve and to satisfy me beyond the possibility of doubt that everything possible has been done, before I admit that the law cannot be enforced.

Moreover, when I get at it, I am going to see if we cannot break the license forthwith of any saloon-keeper who sells on Sunday. I will try to get at it through the excise board, and whether I succeed or fail with either I shall not let up for one moment in my endeavor to make the police understand that no excuse will be permitted on their part when the law is not observed, and that Sunday by Sunday it is to be enforced more and more rigorously.

This applies just as much to the biggest hotel as to the smallest grog-shop. *The Sun* prophesies success for

* Statement to the press. *New York Sun*, June 20, 1895.

public sentiment. I am an officer of the law, and I recognize the public sentiment that is embodied in law. Moreover, let me point out one feature upon which *The Sun* has not dwelt. I should enforce the law anyhow because it is the law; but in addition to this I shall insist upon the rigid enforcement of the law as the only way to stop blackmail and corruption.

To allow a lax enforcement of the law means to allow it to be enforced just so far as individual members of the police force are willing to wink at its evasion. It is not necessary to say that this must mean in very many cases that the saloons which pay blackmail, or have political backing, get off free, so that the law will be enforced rigidly in the interest of every honest saloon-keeper, and in the interest of honesty in the management of the police force.

Law-abiding citizens are rarely blackmailed. The chief chance for blackmail, with all its frightful attendant demoralization, arises from having a law which is not strictly enforced, which certain people are allowed to violate with impunity for corrupt reasons, while other offenders who lack their political influence are mercilessly harassed. All our resources will be strained to prevent any such discrimination and to secure the equal punishment of all offenders.

Woe be to the policeman who exposes himself to the taint of corruption.