

by similar evidence. When the Beaconsfield Government appealed to the country in that year, there was every appearance of halcyon weather for the Conservatives. Bye-elections had been held a few weeks previously at which Conservatives had been returned by large majorities; but at the General Election following immediately these very constituencies returned Liberals by equally large majorities; and the Beaconsfield Government was swept away. So may Mr. Gladstone's hopes be swept away. He has as much reason perhaps to regard the result of the Spalding election as a symptom of a general revolution of feeling in his favour, as the Unionists had to regard the result at St. Austell as indicating a revulsion against him; but he will be as wrong to build on his hypothesis as they were on theirs. Bye-elections are evidently utterly untrustworthy guides to general feeling: at a bye-election the attention of the electors not being fixed so firmly and enthusiastically on great issues as at a General Election, local politics come more into play, and the election is probably often decided by causes purely local. It takes but a few abstentions or changes of votes ordinarily to alter the result in any constituency.

THE Crimes Bill has received the Royal assent, and thus Ireland is placed, as to the law, very much in the same position as Scotland. In Scotland the existing and permanent law and practice closely correspond to the provisions of the present Crimes Bill, and the Irish have little ground to complain that their country is treated exceptionally among the Three Kingdoms. What is exceptional is the amount of crime in Ireland, and an organised conspiracy that has usurped the functions of the Queen's Government there; and these have created a necessity for putting into operation in Ireland a system of law that, in many respects in a more stringent and far-reaching form, is the system of law of Scotland also. Nearly the whole of Ireland has been proclaimed, for the purpose of restoring the authority of the Queen's Government; but we have reason to hope that with a watchful Liberal Party holding the check rein, due consideration in applying the law will be given by the Government to the exceptional condition into which Ireland has been brought by the political agitation of the past few years.

It is to be hoped the settlement of the long-pending Afghan Boundary dispute may prove to be the beginning of a reconciliation between England and Russia. There is no reason whatever why the two Powers should not march amicably side by side in Asia. Russia is doing a civilising work there that certainly could not be done by England; and England, we feel assured, may rest for another half century in perfect security as respects India. Not India but Persia is menaced by the Russian advance; through Persia is the road to the sea that Russia has in view. An air-hole to breathe her vast land-bound populations she must have, in Asia as well as in Europe; and the sooner she has an outlet through the Persian Gulf the sooner may Asia breathe in peace. India would then be separated from the Russian Power by the deserts of Beloochistan, as she now is by the deserts of Afghanistan; and it should be the beginning and end of the Eastern policy of England to keep Russia on the far side of both those desert countries, to penetrate either of which, from Turkestan or from Persia, amid hostile populations, would leave any invading troops little able to cope with the fresh force that England could muster for the defence of India. Russia seated on the Persian Gulf, would, besides, be open to attack by a naval Power, as she is not now; which would be a pledge of good behaviour that might to some extent counterveil a Russian control of the Bosphorus. With the overwhelming military strength of Russia, the unity of national sentiment, and the endurance and persistence of that great nation, it is hardly possible that Russia can be forever kept out of Constantinople. That is her main aim no doubt; it is the great cynosure at present of Russia's aspirations, and there is no power at present visible in the world with both sufficient force and sufficient motive to withstand her. In possession of Constantinople she would threaten all Europe, and yet be safe from attack; and it would be no small advantage to have her at the same time seated on the Persian Gulf, which would be one vulnerable point in a colossal empire otherwise almost invulnerable.

THE shocking death of young Mr. Macdonald on Saturday was due to almost criminal carelessness somewhere. Explain it as we may, multiply words about the explanation as much as we may, the fact remains that this unfortunate lad was shot to death while passing, unconscious of danger, where any other citizen might have been, where every citizen has a perfect right to be: and the crass stupidity that permitted firing over that spot is responsible for his death.

"PLUS D'ANGLETERRE" is the amiable title of a French continuation of the "Battle of Dorking" series of nonsense books. In it the Gallic

author composes the feud between France and Germany by a successful French invasion of Great Britain; whereupon the conqueror offers Heligoland, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Cape Colony, the Island of Ceylon, New Zealand, Vancouver's Island, and the Fiji Islands, to Germany, in exchange for Alsace-Lorraine. The fortifications of these provinces having been demolished, France and Germany shake hands over the discomfiture of perfidious Albion. But unfortunately for our French cook, it is in the first place quite certain that the dish he has prepared would not tempt Germany to let go of Alsace-Lorraine, and in the second place, the hare is not caught yet that is to furnish the meal.

*La Patrie*, of Montreal, complains of the ill-will and systematic partisanship displayed by the cable correspondents in selecting from the English press, and failing that, from the German press, the most unfavourable comments that can be found on what is said and done in France. This, it says, is without doubt what is called in England "fair play." We do not know what England has to do with it: these cable correspondents are notoriously Irishmen, all whose fictions about Irish affairs our Anglophobic friends of the French-Canadian press receive and disseminate among the *habitans* without a scruple. Perhaps, if *La Patrie* will explain to its readers that the anti-British ideas they have been fed with for a year or two mainly come from the same source as the present anti-French accounts, they may begin to suspect there may be another side than the one they are acquainted with to the Home Rule Question.

*Science* has published a useful sketch map, showing on a gnomonic projection the relative merits, in point of distance between England and Eastern Asia, of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the American Pacific railroads. The map extends from England in the East to Yokohama in the West. It makes it clear why the North-west and North-east passages were so eagerly sought for. They are the nearest to the great circle (*i.e.*, the shorter line) between England and China, which runs right through the Polar Basin. The nearer a route approaches this great circle, the shorter it is. Therefore it is seen from this map that the distance from London to Yokohama *via* the Canadian Pacific Railway is by far the shortest. There are several facts, however, which detract from the value of this route. The great circle between London and New York crosses Newfoundland. Yet ships do not keep close to the southern point of that island, on account of the numerous dangers obstructing their passage, but prefer to go a roundabout way, keeping far south. The same difficulty is encountered in approaching Halifax; and therefore the longer route to New York is by far to be preferred to the shorter one to Nova Scotia, particularly in the latter part of the winter and in spring, when ice is met with in the Atlantic Ocean. The Gulf of St. Lawrence is not navigable during part of the year, on account of the heavy masses of ice. Thus the shortness of the route from England to Nova Scotia is more than counterbalanced by the dangers of navigation. But even from New York the Canada route to Japan is far shorter than that by way of San Francisco. The difference in length between the great circle San Francisco-Yokohama and Vancouver-Yokohama is seen on the sketch map. It must be considered, however, that the latter cannot be made use of, as it crosses Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. Steamers must keep farther south, and must strike the San Francisco route near the longitude of the west point of Alaska Peninsula. This makes the distance from Vancouver to Yokohama somewhat longer than it would be without this chain of islands intervening. The distance from New York to Puget Sound by way of the Northern Pacific Railroad is longer than by the Canadian Pacific Railroad, as Lake Michigan extends so far south; but when the road from Umatilla Junction to Tacoma is finished, the difference in the two distances will not be very great. The sea-route from Tacoma to Yokohama is of course essentially the same as that from Vancouver. The great circle between these places and the ports of China runs nearly through the Tsugaru Strait, passing Hakodadi. When the work on the Canadian road is completed, it will probably not be more frequently obstructed by snow-drifts than the Northern Pacific, but the difference in distance between these two lines is not so great as to exclude successful competition.

WITH respect to the Hudson Bay route, *Science* says: "The railroad question is of the greatest importance for the development of the North-west Territories,—Athabasca, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Assiniboia, and Manitoba. The distance to the nearest ports is so long that export is very difficult; therefore endeavours have been made to open a new route by making use of Hudson Bay. The proposed Hudson Bay route from Liverpool to Port Nelson is very short and straight, and would offer a splendid opportunity for the export of the North-west Territories. We believe, however, that the character of the seas will prevent the plan being carried