

BARON HUDDLESTON ON JUSTIFYING HOMICIDE.

Commissioners, and I am therefore obliged to tell you what, in my judgment, after careful consideration, I deem to be the law of England. Deliberate homicide can be justifiable or excusable only under certain well recognised heads—cases where men are put to death by order of a legally constituted tribunal in pursuance of a legal sentence; cases where the killing is in advancement of public justice, as, for instance, criminals escaping from justice, resisting their lawful apprehension, and other such cases enumerated by Blackstone, vol. iv. 48. So also where homicide is committed for the prevention of any forcible and atrocious crime; again where men in the discharge of their duty to their country and in the service of their queen kill any of the enemies of their queen and country; and, lastly, where an individual, acting in lawful defence of himself or his property, or in the reasonable apprehension of danger to his life, kills another. It is obvious that this case falls under none of these heads. The illustration found in the writers upon civil law, which is alluded to in "*Cicero de Officiis*," and mentioned by Lord Bacon in his "*Elements of the Law*," and which is quoted in some legal works as the ground of the doctrine of necessity, is placed by Blackstone under the latter head—of self-defence. He says: "Where two persons being shipwrecked, and getting on the same plank, but finding it not able to save them both, one of them thrusts the other from it, whereby he is drowned, he who thus preserves his own life at the expense of another man's is excused from unavoidable necessity and the principle of self-defence, since their both remaining on the same weak plank is a mutual though innocent attempt upon and endangering of each other's life. But Sir William Blackstone, in another part of the same volume, points out that under no circumstance can an innocent man be slain for the purpose of saving the life of another who is not his assailant; and he says, therefore, though a man be violently assaulted, and hath no possible means of escaping death but by killing an innocent person, this fear and force shall not acquit him of murder, for he ought rather to die himself than escape by the murder of an innocent; but "in such a case he is permitted to kill the assailant, for there the law of nature and self-defence, its primary

canon, have made him his own protector." Bishop, in his "*Criminal Law*," a high American authority, supports this view, and it is the more important, as he refers to the American case to which I have before alluded. It is impossible to say that the act of Dudley and Stephens was an act of self-defence. Parker, at the bottom of the boat, was not endangering their lives by any act of his; the boat could hold them all, and the motive for killing him was not for the purpose of lightening the boat, but for the purpose of eating him, which they could do when dead, but not while living. What really imperilled their lives was not the presence of Parker, but the absence of food and drink. It could not be doubted for a moment that if Parker was possessed of a weapon of defence—say a revolver—he would have been perfectly justified in taking the life of the captain, who was on the point of killing him, which shows clearly that the act of the captain was unjustifiable. It may be said that the selection of the boy—as, indeed, Dudley seems to have said—was better, because his stake in society, having no children at all, was less than theirs; but if such reasoning is to be allowed for a moment, Cicero's test is that under such circumstances of emergency the man who is to be sacrificed is to be the man who will be the least likely to do benefit to the republic, in which case Parker, as a young man, might be likely to live longer and be of more service to the republic than the others. Such reasoning must be always more ingenious than true. Nor can it be urged for a moment, that the state of Parker's health, which is alleged to have been failing in consequence of his drinking the salt water, would justify it. No person is permitted, according to the law of this country, to accelerate the death of another. Besides if once this doctrine of necessity is to be admitted, why was Parker selected rather than any of the other three? One would have imagined that his state of health and the misery in which he was at the time would have obtained for him more consideration at their hands. However, it is idle to lose one's self in speculation of this description. I am bound to tell you that if you are satisfied that the boy's death was caused or accelerated by the act of Dudley, or Dudley and Stephens, this is a case of deliberate homicide,