

she may conceivably be shown to be innocent. And yet, what compensation is possible in such a case? What atonement, which it is in the power of the State to offer, would be much better than a mockery of the misery it has inflicted?

The question touched upon in the preceding paragraph, stands closely related to the old subject of debate having reference to the reliability of circumstantial evidence. There can be, we suppose, no reasonable doubt that under the operation of the laws of evidence which prevail in modern civilized communities innocent persons are, from time to time, sentenced to imprisonment and death by courts of law. No living being—or at most not more than one or two—really knows whether the young Englishman who was executed in Woodstock a few years since for the murder of a companion in the woods, in the vicinity of that town, was really the perpetrator of the ghastly deed. Did the jury, therefore, really do wrong in pronouncing him guilty, the court in pronouncing the sentence, and the Executive of the country in carrying it into effect? It may not be an absolutely sufficient answer, but it is perhaps the best available, to point out, as is usually done when the question is under discussion, that to refuse to convict and punish on such circumstantial evidence would be to render conviction and punishment, in nine cases out of ten, impossible, and so to give practical impunity to criminals. Under modern conditions the direct testimony of even two witnesses would often be far less reliable than a chain of circumstantial evidence of reasonable strength. We are thus brought back to the old dilemma, which so often confronts us at the most momentous crises, of a choice between two apparent evils, i.e., between two courses of action neither of which is absolutely the best conceivable, but one or the other of which is the best possible under the circumstances. In this, as in many other cases, probability is, under our limitations, as Bishop Butler has said, "the very guide of life." The only remaining question is that of the relative degrees of probability which warrant certain conclusions and actions. These can, of course, be matters of individual judgment only. It may be, as so many are now crying out, that the detectives in the Lizzie Borden case were stupid and brutal. If so there is a practical evil to be remedied by practical methods. But the sum of the whole matter is that there is no absolute escape from the risks and dangers of life, and that one of these dangers, to which every one of us is exposed in a society in which strict laws are rigidly enforced, is that of becoming some day the victim of circumstances and paying the penalty with the loss of liberty or life under process of law.

If we regulate our conduct according to our own convictions, we may safely disregard the praise or censure of others.—Pascal.

## THE FUTURE RELATIONS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

Those who are following with open minds the vicissitudes of the Home Rule struggle, will read with interest what two of the giants of debate, on opposite sides, have recently had to say on the effects of Home Rule, if granted, on the future relations of Great Britain and Ireland. Lord Salisbury in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and Mr. Bryce in reply in the *Westminster Gazette*, have recently afforded readers a rare opportunity of looking first on this picture, then on that. Lord Salisbury had been asked, he says, to explain in what respect, according to his judgment, Home Rule for Ireland would injuriously affect Great Britain in regard to her external relations. To this question he addresses himself, explaining what in his view would be the two most formidable kinds of danger.

The first of these has relation to India and the Asiatic Colonies, where, he thinks, the blow will be most sensibly felt. He prefaces what he has to say on this point with the following significant remarks:

"In our self-governed colonies its operation may be comparatively slight; but they are already so nearly independent that the injury which it is possible to do the external power of Great Britain in this direction is not of very large dimensions. But with the Asiatic, and generally the tropical, colonies matters stand on a different footing. They are genuinely subject to the rule of the British Government; any weakening of that dominion must mean entire separation; and with separation the loss of all the power, the prestige, the trade, the concentration of realized wealth at home, which the possession of those dependencies confers upon Great Britain. If it is once believed that, in order to avoid a worry, or to satisfy the maxims of some transient cant, she can be made to surrender what our fathers won by strength of arm and will—then when such a conviction is spread abroad, all the force that she can bring into the field may not suffice to uphold her challenged supremacy. The taste for surrender spreads like a contagion in the spirit of the community which has once admitted the fatal germ."

These sentences and those which follow on this point are, by the way, quoted at length by the *Daily Chronicle*, in order as it says to show how completely "Lord Salisbury re-echoes the sentiments of those who opposed the establishment of constitutional government in the Colonies."

The second course of peril is discussed by Lord Salisbury at greater length. This peril arises out of the probability of extensive privateering in the case of any future war in which Great Britain may be engaged. Lord Salisbury quotes Captain Mahan's book to show how great was the damage inflicted on British commerce by privateers between 1793 and 1814. He also points out that while in the last great war Great Britain was able to feed herself, in any future conflict she will be utterly dependent on importations from abroad for her

food supply, and that if it were possible for an enemy's cruisers or privateers to materially diminish this supply, the acutest suffering might be inflicted on millions of the people. He then states his forecast or fears in regard to the part that Ireland under Home Rule would play, as follows:

"How would the matter stand if Ireland, so far as its internal government was concerned, were quite independent; if the executive and the local administration in all its branches were in hands that were not friendly to us, and we were engaged in some war with a great maritime Power? Of course we might blockade with our navy all the bays and harbours of Ireland, but so heavy a task, on such a coast and in such an ocean, would tax our naval resources so heavily that our navy would have little leisure for any other duty. But if the harbours of Ireland were not watched by our ships, and their shores were in hands not friendly to us, it is obvious that the supply of coal to hostile cruisers and hostile privateers might be arranged with the greatest ease, and that Ireland would become a base of operations against the ocean traffic, and especially the cereal traffic of Great Britain. Now Ireland is unfortunately placed in the most convenient possible position for the purposes of a hostile Power in that respect. She lies just opposite to our four principal ports that turn towards the west—Glasgow, Liverpool, Cardiff, and Bristol. A swarm of cruisers might lie on the ocean pathways which lead to St. George's Channel, with the certainty of being able always to fill up their supply of coal when they wanted it, by running for some Irish harbour which had been agreed upon beforehand and in which the requisite supply of coal and other stores would be found. Of course, as long as the Irish Executive receives its orders from Westminster the police and the magistracy serving under that Executive would take care that no comfort was given to any of the Queen's enemies in an Irish port, and the privateers would have to return to the French coast for their supplies. But if the Irish Executive was unfriendly and independent, no such inconvenient vigilance would be practised by police and magistrates acting under its orders, and the population would enthusiastically throw themselves into a commerce which would injure Great Britain, and would be highly remunerative into the bargain. Probably the population of Ulster, whom by granting Home Rule we should have basely abandoned, would join with the keenest zest in any plan by which Great Britain could be humiliated and punished."

The assumption that Ireland would, under all circumstances, remain friendly and loyal, Lord Salisbury regards as not warranted by the teachings either of past history or of present experiences. It will be observed that the compliment which he pays to the loyalty of Ulster, of which we hear so much, is of a decidedly left-handed kind.

Having given a gist of Lord Salisbury's main argument in his own words, we cannot do better than to give Mr. Bryce's reply in the same form, so far as our space will permit. The opening sentences refer to a passage in Lord Salisbury's article which we have not quoted, but the purport of which is apparent: