NAVAL AND MILITARY RETIREMENTS.

The "Graphic" possesses to perfection the art—or knack—of producing the neatest little leading articles, saying, in the best style, and from the soundest points of view, just what it is desirable to say—neither too much nor too little. One of these pithy little leaders has something to say on a debate in the Lords on the promotion of Naval Lieutenants, in the course of which it transpired that, out of every nine lieutenants, seven "are doomed never to rise above that grade." It was recognized that it was impossible to ensure an equal flow of promotion, "the neck of the bottle being very narrow, while the body is wide." Retirement at an age admitting a recourse to other employments, means large increase to the non-effective list—"a very serious matter." How serious, the following rough enumeration of the Retired Lists will show. Flag officers, 251; captains, 393; commanders, 450; lieutenants, 226; navigating and sub-lieutenants, 156; chaplains and naval instructors, 126; engineers of all ranks, 438; medical officers of all ranks, 254; paymasters and assistants do., 298; general officers of marines, 13; colonels and lt.-cols., 54; majors, 45; captains, 135; lieutenants, quarter-masters, etc., 60.

This list does not nearly cover all the ground, but great as is the naval burden, it is nothing to that of the army Every one in a garrison town is now familiar with the retirement of majors and other officers in the prime of life. From the list of full colonels alone over a dozen retirements have been gazetted since the Monthly Army List for March was published, and the number is probably not above the average.

"The half-pay naval lieutenant," says the "Graphic," "is no new creation like the compulsorily-retired army captain or major. We have always had him among us, and, on the whole, he generally seems to be a rather jolly dog, although somewhat given to grumbling when his locker happens to be destitute of shot."

The upshot of it all will be that the absurdly early limitations of age will have to be much enlarged, and officers of both services will again have to face the prospect of long service in subordinate ranks, as the officers of other armies and navies have to do.

The sort of prescriptive right to rise to high rank, which has been assumed of late years, is in reality an absurdity, while, on the other hand, the hardships of retirement to many an able officer is great.

Many a captain of former days was glad to serve for many years after 40, the present age of compulsory retirement, if not then a major. Many a naval lieutenant of 20 years service in that rank occupied the responsible and respected position of first-lieutenant of a line-of-battle ship.

The short service of the rank and file has deprived the army of the tough and seasoned veterans of from 40 to 50, who contributed so largely to the endurance and steadiness of the regiment. It may be that corps are not much the better for the absence of an older class of officers.

As for age, *per se*, the capabilities are extremely varied. One man is as good at sixty as another may be at forty-five. Von Moltke, we know, goes with the century, and a return of the ages of German officers of all ranks would not be without value.

Howsoever the admiralty and the war department may scheme and contrive, one thing is pretty certain, *i. e.*, that Great Britain will not very long submit to the rapid and indefinite inflation of the already tremendous Retired Lists.

THE SCOTCH YACHT THISTLE.

The ease with which the now famous schooner yacht America outsailed all her English competitors, not only astonished British yachtsmen, but had the effect of completely revolutionizing yacht designing and building. American designers still stick to the centre-board, and it is claimed that they sacrifice both safety and comfort to speed, their yachts being designated as "skimming dishes." British designers, on the contrary, turn out yachts that are not only models of beauty and workmanship, but also admirable sea boats, capable of facing with safety the severest ocean gales. The Americans have been forced to adopt a rig that is almost the same as the English cutter rig, and their last yacht, the *Volunteer*, can scarcely be called a "skimming dish," as she draws some ten feet of water. In Great Britain Scotch designers and builders now take the lead, and their steel cutters have carried everything before them in European waters, but, so far, they have been unable to beat the American yachts specially designed to meet them. The height of perfection seems to have been attained in the *Thistle*, which has lately arrived in New York, after a tempestuous passage of twenty-one days, and as a great deal of nonsense has appeared in the United States press in regard to her, our readers will find the following particulars, which we gather from a contemporary, of interest:—

"The idea of building the *Thistle* originated at a meeting of some of the racing men of the Clyde Yacht Club last fall, shortly after the defeat of the *Galatea*. The race was talked over for some time and all were pretty well worked up over the defeat, when somebody jumped up and shouted, 'We'll build a Scotch yacht that'll win that cup' The money was subscribed, the Bells of Glasgow putting down most of it, and Watson, the designer of *Vanduara*, *Saemnoea*, *Madge*, *Marjorie*, and *Clara*, was commanded 'to build a cutter to win the cup.' The order was given at an auspicious time, as the old yachting rules fining beam unmercifully were relaxed, and Watson had a fair chance to work out his boat unhampered by either lack of money or by racing rules. He designed a cutter that sent the Clyde men into ecstacies, and they at once set a firm of prominent shipbuilders to work converting these plans into the strongest steel boat ever put in the water, and sent Watson to New York to study out his sail plan in accordance with the environment of the water she will soon race in. The only ground that the Americans have for boasting that the *Thistle* has been 'Americanized' is this visit of Watson's.

The *Thistle* was built and launched under somewhat peculiar circumstances. Every man who worked on her was sworn to secrecy, she was launched in canvas, and to this day the outside world has no idea of what her lines are. The only measurements that have been made public are those which are taken to enable her to be classed for racing. The comparative sizes of the *Thistle* and *Volunteer* are as follows.

	Thistle.	Volunteer.
Length load water line	85 ft.	86 ft.
Breadth	20 ft. 3 in.	23 ft. 2 in.
Depth of hold	14 ft. 1 in.	10 ft.
Tonnage registered	100 tons.	

The great feature of the *Thistle* is her enormous sail power, but no figures as to the size of her spars have yet been given. It is a very unusual thing for a new yacht to clear everything before her during her first season. This is exactly what the *Thistle* has done, however. She was sent south as soon as launched, and won thirteen firsts out of fifteen starts within a month. She did not win all these races, as the *Irex* managed to score once or twice on her time allowance. There can be no question that the *Thistle* is as much finer a boat than the usual type of diving bell cutter, as the *Volunteer* is when compared with the American skimming dish, and that is saying a good deal. One thing is certain, and that is that the race between the *Volunteer* and the *Thistle* will be the finest matched yacht race ever sailed."

To this may be added the fact that the captain of the *Thistle*, which has now been fitted with her racing gear, makes no secret about the dimensions of the yacht or her internal fittings, but, on the contrary, has given marine reporters the privilege of inspecting her in all parts, and intends to dock her shortly before the race.

THE CHANNEL TUNNEL.

This vexed question was up again before the House of Commons last month. Sir Edward Watkin waxed more eloquent and more discoursive than ever. There seemed, indeed, to remain little in heaven above or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth, which escaped being pressed into the service of his advocacy. There may, perhaps, be no saying what effect his oratory might have produced had it not happened that Mr Gladstone pronounced in favor of the scheme. It may well have occurred to many who may have been on the point of conviction at the tongue of Sir Edward, that it was most improbable that a project involving foreign relations, which met with Mr. Gladstone's approval, could, by any possible stroke of good luck, be for the honor and safety of the nation.

As it was, therefore, the House rejected the bill by 153 to 107 votes. Sir Edward Watkin may, perhaps, derive consolation in his defeat from the fact that the minority in favor on the last division in 1885 was 85, but the renewed discussion has developed points in the military objections to the scheme, which will probably decrease the vote of its advocates whenever the subject may come up again.

No doubt the tunnel would, to some extent, increase commercial facilities, but there is yet much to be done to improve the existing means of crossing the channel, and we have always had a suspicion that a good deal of the support of the scheme comes from the sybarites to whom the "mal-de-mer" is the crumpled rose-leaf of their bed.

At any rate, trade, as we ought in this age to keep diligently in remembrance, is not everything; and, if it were, it would be no unmixed benefit to it to carry out a work which would, in itself, expose it to the frequent recurrence of paralyzing scares. Far better for Sir Edward Watkin and his friends to devote their energy and ability to the improvement of the harbors on the southern coast, a matter in which England is so far behind the other nations of northern Europe, that a great proportion of the large steamers which formerly traded with England only, have been diverted to Havre, Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk, Antwerp and Amsterdam, on whose improvement enormous sums have been wisely expended.

Even were France less hostile in feeling, were she animated by entire good will instead of unquenchable envy and enmity, the tunnel would be a project in considering which the military point of view should preponderate, and the discussion has evoked a point which seems to us to overbalance every other consideration.

There is no higher authority on strategy in the British army than Lieut.-General Sir Edward Bruce Hamley, the author of "The Operations of War." Sir Edward Hamley points out that the danger is not so much from invasion through the tunnel, as from the position of an invader who had made good his footing otherwise.

He contrasts the position of an invading army which had effected a landing before the formation of a tunnel, with that of one which effected a landing after its completion; the peril in the former case, the difficulty of supply, the risk of our regaining command of the channel, with the power, in the latter, of drawing indefinite supplies through the tunnel. "The possession of both ends," says Sir Edward, "would render the invader independent of the sea.....Night and day a stream of troops and supplies would be pouring through the tunnel, possibly under the keels of our victorious Channel fleet. Now, in this case, and I would impress this point, it would no longer be a contest between two armies, but between the entire military resources of France on the one side, and what we could oppose on the other." Thus a tunnel would make hostile occupation, if not invasion, easier. It may be that, by the erection of stupendous works, the head of the tunnel might be made impregnable, but that would involve enormous expenditure, liable to indefinite increase at each new scare.

With Sir Edward Hamley, Lord Wolseley, and all the best military authorities concur. Best, in our opinion, keep the "silver streak" inviolate.