

OUR SERVICE CONTEMPORARIES.

A distinct loss is recognised to have fallen upon the Empire at large, as well as upon Canada herself, in the death of her Premier, Sir John Thompson, with such tragic suddenness a few minutes after having been sworn in a member of the Privy Council at Windsor on Wednesday. The great regret expressed by the Queen is echoed by all her subjects. Very highly approved as most fitting is the offer made by the British Government and accepted by Lady Thompson to convey the remains of her late husband to Halifax, Nova Scotia, on board a man-of-war. Sir John Thompson was universally regarded as a warm and powerful supporter of Imperial Federation, and it is remembered that in the present year he opened at Ottawa the Conference designed to knit in closer bonds the Colonies of the Empire.—United Service Gazette.

The commander of the French expedition to Madagascar, General Duchesne, won his laurels in Tonquin and Formosa. He is a native of Sens, in the Yonne, where he was born in 1837. At eighteen years of age he entered the Military Academy of Saint Cyr, and two years later received his commission as a sub-lieutenant in a line regiment, with which he participated in the Italian campaign. At Solferino he behaved with great gallantry, and was wounded, and he received the Cross of the Legion of Honour for his bravery. During the Franco-German War he served as a captain with Laveaucoupet's heroic division, which was decimated at Forbach. He then passed several years on active service in Africa, returning to France in 1883 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. With General Negrier he proceeded to Tonquin in command of the Foreign Legion, and, operating against the Chinese, stormed at the head of his men the entrenchments at Bac-Ninh. He also participated in the capture of Hung Hou. Promoted to a colonelcy in September, 1884, he was sent to engage the Chinese, who were then besieging Tuyen Quan, and by a brilliant coup de main succeeded in relieving the garrison and in re-victualling the place. A month later he was despatched with a strong force to Formosa, where he frequently engaged the Chinese, and, in spite of their superior numbers, inflicted several signal defeats on them. His conduct during this campaign earned him, besides the promotion already noted, a Commandrship of the Legion of Honour. Returning to France in 1885, he took command of the 110th Regiment of Infantry stationed at Dunkirk. Here he remained until, in 1888, he received the grade of General of Brigade, when he was transferred to Chateauroux. Finally promoted a General of Division in September, 1893, he received the command of the 16th Division of Infantry at Bourges. At the present moment he has charge of the 14th Division at Belfort.

The proposal to create a new naval port

at Port-en-Bessin, between Cherbourg and Havre, is generally well received in both the naval and military circles of France. The situation of the place is favourable, for the entrance having been improved, a harbour will be accessible in which the largest battleships may be secure. It is not proposed to reduce the importance of Cherbourg, but, in view of the great difficulty of adequately fortifying that place, Port-en-Bessin is regarded as the site of an important secondary harbour. The idea is not altogether new, for Admiral Pollu de la Barrière has touched upon it, and a host of writers have discussed the defence of the Cotentin. In military circles the creation of the new port is hailed as a step to that end, for there is an uneasy feeling abroad that a sense of insecurity in the north might tend to paralyse in some degree the military operations of France on her eastern frontier. The possibility of an enemy landing in the Cotentin, fortifying himself behind the lines of Carentan, and taking Cherbourg in the rear, has long been a bugbear to Frenchmen, and found expression, in a remarkable fashion, in the projet of M. Cabart-Danneville—who explained how an invasion might be effected—to hand over the defence to the Navy. The Tempsas criticised adversely the proposal for the new port, and has attributed the project to the weight of local influence, but this judgment seems not well founded. Port-en-Bessin should give a stronger base to the French fleet in the north, and its position, connected by strategic lines with Cherbourg and Havre, would be one of much importance.—Army and Navy Gazette, November 24th.

Holland and Norway are now following the lead of other powers in adopting a small-bore magazine rifle. The experience obtained in the Lombok affair has probably opened the eyes of the Netherlands Government to the necessity of arming the Infantry with a more up-to-date weapon than the 11 mm. Beaumont rifle, which has somewhat unsuccessfully been transformed into a repeating rifle by the addition of a magazine. In the estimates for 1895 a sum of two and a half million florins is to be provided for supplying the first instalment of 6.5 mm. rifles on the Mannlicher system, and for the erection at Amsterdam of the necessary shops and appliances for manufacturing the new rifles and their ammunition. The first requirements will be limited to 140,000 rifles and carbines, with a supply of 400 cartridges per arm, at a total estimated cost of nine million florins. In Norway the military committee on small arms has reported in favour of the introduction of a 6.5 mm. Krag Jorgensen repeating rifle of a somewhat improved type to that recently adopted for the Danish Army. The committee recommends that 20,000 of the new rifles should be manufactured abroad, and 4,000 at the Small Arms Factory at Kongsberg. These 24,000 rifles will be sufficient to re-arm the line battalions, and as soon as they have been issued the old 10 15 mm. Jarman repeating rifles

will be handed over to the Reserve battalions. When the supply of the new rifles reaches 70,000 the Reserve battalions will also receive the 6.5 mm. rifle, and the Jarman rifles will be made over to the Landwehr battalions. The new pattern rifle, which has a magazine holding five cartridges, weighs 8 lb. 13 oz., exclusive of bayonet, which weighs over 8 oz., and the initial velocity of the bullet is 2,296 foot-seconds.—United Service Magazine, November 24th.

Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians) (100th).—Headquarters and the service companies will embark at Bombay on Saturday next in the hired transport Dilwara for conveyance to Queenstown, where they are due January 11.

A few years ago a party of American naval officers were visiting a British ship, and the conversation turned on the various vessels then present, and their different capabilities, &c. Someone remarked that the American flagship possessed great coal stowage capacity, according to the printed description, and asked her fleet engineer if such was the case? He replied, "Yes, sir, her cubic space for coal stowage is very great, very great indeed, but there is somewhat of an obstacle or, so to say, a hitch as regards the practical utility of the stowage space in question. The bunker space is undoubtedly great, but for some reason, probably good, the constructors have made a kind of 'hanging tunnel' through the bunker, and it is necessary to send a couple of firemen or coal trimmers behind this tunnel during coaling, to trim the coal so as to fill the bunker, and when they have done so there is no means of extricating these men, so that it is a question of sacrificing the large extra bunker accommodation or the firemen, and hitherto the firemen's interests have carried the day." It is likely therefore that the coaling of other ships besides our own are hampered by the necessities of their construction.—Army and Navy Gazette.

As an experienced officer pointed out in our columns last week, there is no doubt that the time has come for facing the question of rifle ranges in a business-like manner. The paramount importance of good shooting in all branches of the Army is not sufficiently realized by the British public, else the Government would be less diffident in dealing with the provision of ranges on a scale suitable to modern needs. Matters are very differently managed in the great armies of the Continent, where the most thorough-going and well-thought-out arrangements are made, not only for supplying good weapons and ammunition, but for giving the soldiers ample instruction and practice in their use. Now that the value of land has reached its lowest limit, it would be a wise policy to acquire at once what sooner or later we must possess, namely, an adequate number of safe and convenient ranges for firing the new small-bore rifle. This must be regarded as a necessity for any efficient military force, and it would be well to provide it before the musketry of our soldiers deteriorates, and before the occurrence of further accidents. In more instances than one, the places where practice with the Lee-Metford is permitted are absolutely unsafe for the purpose, and it is right that the attention of those responsible should be urgently called to that fact.