

OBEDIENCE.

Lord Randolph Churchill gave the Channel Tunnelists a hard hit the other day, and fortified his sarcasm with an actual incident, which may well be recommended in the way of caution to all officers. An officer, who, in actual warfare, disobeys orders, or delays carrying them out, does so at a fearful responsibility. We notice the point now in the interests of our own fast-improving Militia. The Ridgeway affair, in 1866, which ought to have resulted in more utter disaster to the Fenians than actually befell them, was "boshed"—to use a vulgar, but expressive term—by the self-sufficiency of the Volunteer officer who happened to be in command. This mistaken gentleman, whose mere courage, to do him justice, was, as we believe, unjustly impugned, thought he was going to do great things, and disobeyed the orders of Colonel Peacock, of the 16th (Regulars,) to skirmish, steadily retiring, in order to lead the enemy on. Had he done so, Colonel Peacock, in his advance, would have taken them in the rear, and the whole might have been captured with probably little loss to either side. The Militia Colonel elected to stand his ground. The "Queen's Own" ran out of ammunition. I might behave admirably, and the skirmish was a fiasco which might easily have been a disgrace. Fortunately, disgrace has never sat upon Canadian standards. This is one example. That which is cited by Lord Randolph is as follows:—

"In the crisis of the Franco German war, Marshal MacMahon gave orders that the tunnels of the Vosges should be blown up, as had been arranged beforehand, to retard the advance of the enemy; but the engineer who received the instructions hesitated to destroy those fine engineering works, and the Germans seized and used them. Can we be sure that a Secretary for War sitting in Downing street would be more prompt and resolute than the French engineer, and would press the button at the proper time?"

It is on such chances that the fortune of war turns. Let our Militia officers lay the lesson to heart. Who is to say what influence on the whole war may have been lost to the French by this act of disobedience, or say, even of hesitation. It should never have been lost sight of that the Commander-in-Chief grasps, or should grasp the whole situation—the whole "theatre" of a campaign—the Regimental officer cannot know what is in his General's mind, and the logical inference is that he must act as a machine under the direction of his Commander, however much he may impart to the integer of the force under his immediate orders, his own vitality and discretion. There are, of course, very rare cases in which a subordinate officer may risk a deviation from the precise orders of his superior, but it is needless to say he must be very confident of the rapidity and truth of his own intuitions. Even Clive, the most daring of Generals, walked up and down under the trees for hours before he made up his mind to over-ride the consensus of his council of war, and direct the attack at Plassey.

"STRAINED RELATIONS."

There is undeniably a strained condition in the relations between this country and the United States. While it is not at all likely that the apparently growing and increasing difficulties will lead to anything so serious as war; still, feelings on both sides of the line will, naturally, be more or less irritated, and dislike fostered thereby. The confirmation of the fishery and of the extradition treaties, now before the Senate of the United States, appear to stand no possible chance of being ratified. The extradition treaty would put an end to the one country being made the refuge of embezzlers of the other, but because it contains clauses inserted by England, providing for the extradition of dynamiters and others of like ilk, the Senate having no power to amend it, prefers to reject it altogether. The fishery treaty would of course settle that vexatious question for some time at least; but because it was negotiated by a Democratic President and his cabinet without the direct authorization of Congress—which is said to be a violation of precedent, if not of law—and because it is assumed that certain provisions would enable Great Britain to practically dictate some changes in the tariff of the United States, it will also be thrown out.

The Senate has appointed two district committees to investigate the international relations existing between Canada and the United States, and both are openly hostile to the present administration of the American Government and to Canada.

While the committee of which Senator Hoar is chairman, will do what it can to put in a strong light the "outrages" committed by the seizure of American fishing vessels for violating the Treaty of 1818 and the Canadian Customs laws, it is likely that it will give more attention to the canal rates than to any other matter, having persuaded itself, or at all events assuming, that it has here a case in equity against Canada, whose virtual abolition of the tolls on grain reaching the St. Lawrence Ports by way of the Welland and St. Lawrence Canals is considered by it to amount to a practical discrimination, not, it is true, against American vessels as such, but against American ports, and Senator Hoar may be depended upon to make the most of this "grievance."

It is announced by Senator Cullom, chairman of the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee, that his committee intends "to investigate, in a thorough manner, the action of the Canadian railways." Here, also a grievance is alleged against Canada, i.e., competition with American lines for American freight at slaughter rates.

Another grievance that is looming up in the near future, and which has already received some attention in the U. S. Senate, is the alleged fact that a line of English steamers has been organized to ply between Chinese and Japanese ports and Vancouver, subsidized in part at least by Canada to convey freight, mails, and coolies. It is said that a principal portion of these Chinamen thus imported will be transferred to the C. P. R., to be carried

in bond and smuggled into the United States in defiance of the American law, which forbids the introduction of Chinese labor.

With regard to these points. If the benefit of the alleged low rates to American transmitters of freight is not considered to weigh with the inconvenience to American Railway Companies, it is presumed that Congress, which can legislate with a very high hand where it chooses, would not find itself at fault in enacting a law to bring matters into accordance with its views.

The anticipated introduction of "Coolies" into the United States is perhaps somewhat different, and it is possible that Canada ought to take reasonable measures to prevent the annoyance.

The whole state of things thus shadowed forth, however, is evidently due to a widespread spirit of interference, aggression, and jealousy of any national progress the Dominion may make, which is determined to lose no opportunity of embarrassing the international relations, while the instigators of the policy conveniently ignore the outrageous seizures in the Behring Sea.

NEW SHIPS.

If the intelligence is correct that the *Aurora* is to succeed the *Hellerophon* as Flag Ship on this Station, those interested can see what she will be like by an engraving in the *Illustrated London News* of her sister ship, the *Orlando*. There are seven of these new steam cruisers, either rapidly approaching completion, or newly launched. They are the *Aurora*, *Andradia*, *Galatea*, *Immortalite*, *Narcissus*, *Orlando*, and *Unhunted*. They are of 5,000 tons displacement, and 8,300 horse-power, and carry 12 heavy guns.

It will be noticed by those acquainted with naval types that this new class, of which no doubt more will be laid down, bear the names of the great 50 gun frigates of twenty years ago—a class magnificent in their day, and ranging about 2,700 tons, old measurement.

On the list at the beginning of the year, there were no fewer than 51 vessels, of all classes, under the head of "building and completing," out of which no less than ten are first-class iron-clads. Of these only one, the *Hero*, has as small a tonnage as 6,200, the remainder being all above 10,000, and the *Nile* and *Trafalgar* very nearly 12,000.

It is a marked characteristic of every one of the new ships, that their horse-power is immensely in excess of their tonnage, indicating that the Admiralty is fully alive to the importance of speed. Every class is of larger size than that which corresponded to it a year or two ago. The new gun-boats, for instance, of which there are nine on the building list, are of nearly 800 tons, instead of 450.

Two other important new classes appear in the list referred to. One is what we suppose, is called the M. class. It contains at present five ships—the *Magicienne*, *Marathon*, *Medea*, *Medusa*, and *Melpomene*. These five average 2,890 tons, are of 9,000 horse-power, and carry six guns.

The other at present embraces the *Forth*, the *Thames* and the *Sovereign*, of 3,550 tons, 5,700 horse-power, and 12 guns. There are also four more larger and improved sloops of the *Buzzard* class.

Old England is by no means asleep!

THE COUNTY OF HALTON AND THE SCOTT ACT.

We distinctly refrain from using a phrase which has become vulgarized by over use, and saying that the *Montreal Witness* "is nothing, if not" goody-goody, and Prohibitionist. The *Montreal Witness* is a great deal more than that. It is a very able and earnest paper, whose utterances are well worth marking from time to time on various subjects.

We believe that morality is not engendered, and never can be engendered by Act of Parliament, and we repel the assumption that all virtue is embodied in total abstinence. We are absolutely confident that the individual liberty of the subject is the highest of all secular considerations, and that undue interference with it in the supposed interests of morality is mischievous. All individual freedom is menaced to-day, by combines of every sort, size and description, and Prohibition is the most aggressive of them all. If the ordinary propagandist of this cult could be persuaded that all earthly welfare does not hinge on a single idea, he would be satisfied with the fact that Canada is already the soberest country in the world, and trust to her general God-fearing tendencies, and the progress of ethics, in which she is in no wise behind other nations, to do all that is necessary. But the Prohibitionists, excellent as are their objects and estimable as their characters, allow one idea to obscure the whole breadth of their mental horizon, and fail to grasp the fact that human nature is hard to drive, but not so difficult to persuade.

Nothing is more certain than revulsion where a principle is pushed beyond reason. The recent defeats of the Scott Act in Ontario seem to indicate the inevitable reaction of individualism against arbitrary dictation and one-sided legislation.

The following extract from the *Montreal Witness*, so far as we quote it, is a piece of special pleading which does not impress us with the soundness of the cause. The remainder is merely an exhortation of the usual kind:—

"Halton seems to be the model county to do and suffer for prohibition, for and in the presence of the whole nation. Everything done in Halton in connection with the Scott Act awakes as much interest as in a dozen other counties. Halton was the first in Ontario to pass the Act. It was the first to resist its repeal. In it the Act was, perhaps, best enforced. In it the advantages of the Act were as plainly proved as anywhere; yet it was the first to repeal it, and now, as might be expected, it is for the benefit of the whole country experiencing the natural results of repeal—more drunkenness and more crime. For the three years on which Halton has now entered white glove assizes will be the exception instead of the rule."