

the order of the Quebec bench, Ottawa being in Ontario; if that be so, it is high time we had a Dominion Court which could compel obedience to its orders. Whether this unjustifiable violation of the spirit of the law, as well as its letter, will place an estoppel upon any attempt at investigation, we are not advised. At any rate, M. Fournier has done his best to prevent it. He has raised a doubt whether, after all, we shall reap all the benefit from the ballot its advocates promised us. It may turn out in the end that it has closed the door to one class of evils to let another in by the window.

President Grant's annual Message calls for no special remark. It is of the conventional length and more than the conventional wordiness and clumsiness of expression. There is no mention of the Canadian Reciprocity Treaty, because it had been previously sent down to the Senate with a special message. The only subject on which the public were anxious to hear the President's views was that of the currency. It might have been thought that he had expressed himself with sufficient clearness in the Veto Message. But he has vacillated as often as the champions of inflation and contraction alternately gained his ear. All through he has been a nose of wax, which, twisted about from time to time, now appears to have been frozen into permanent shape and direction. Some change in his views was expected on this occasion, in consequence of his chagrin at the November defeat. A week or two after the result was known, a semi-official announcement was made in New York that there seemed to be no reason why the Republican party should trouble itself any longer about "hard money." It is not unlikely that General Grant, in the first outburst of vexation, may have resolved to prepare a deluge for his successor. If so, the idea was abandoned, for the Message is clear and sound in its

advocacy of an early return to specie payments.

It seems strange to British eyes to see the name of General Butler occupying its usual prominence in Congressional proceedings, notwithstanding his recent defeat in Massachusetts. The motive which prompted American statesmen to keep a House of Representatives alive after it had been slain, if we may speak *Hibernicæ*, was a conservative one. It was anticipated that the frequent recurrence of popular elections might be productive of mischievous results. The broader the basis of the electorate, the more liable it is to sudden fluctuations of opinion—the more sensitive to transient impressions. In order to guard, as far as possible, against the hasty and ill-considered legislation which might be expected from a new Congress, deliberating under the pressure of the moment, the existing plan was adopted. The theory appears to have been that the plans of an expiring House would be modified by the verdict of the people, and that there would be time for a new one to await the sober afterthought of the electorate before committing themselves to action. On the other hand, this conservative device is itself the parent of another, and perhaps a more serious, mischief. Under our Parliamentary system, the last Session of the House is always passed in courting popular favour; in Washington the representatives can afford to disregard it. The consequence is that the last end of every Congress is worse than the first. Every one—the defeated members especially—is absorbed in "feathering his nest," and corruption reigns unchecked. The November elections have had their effect upon Congress—that is, upon its public policy. The Civil Rights Bill has been introduced by General Butler, but so shorn of the offensive provisions Mr. Sumner would have deemed essential, that it is doubtful if it will encounter any serious opposition from the South. The disgraceful scenes at Vicks-