

attention ; but while determined to omit no effort which could give vigour to the operations of the war, I have deemed it My duty not to decline any overtures which might reasonably afford a prospect of a safe and honourable peace. Accordingly, when the Emperor of Austria lately offered to Myself, and to My august Ally the Emperor of the French, to employ His good offices with the Emperor of Russia with a view to endeavour to bring about an amicable adjustment of the matters at issue between the contending Powers, I consented, in concert with My Allies, to accept the offer thus made ; and I have the satisfaction to inform you that certain conditions have been agreed upon which I hope may prove the foundation of a General Treaty of Peace.

Negotiations for such a Treaty will shortly be opened at Paris.

In conducting those Negotiations I shall be careful not to lose sight of the objects for which the war was undertaken ; and I shall deem it right in no degree to relax My Naval and Military preparations until a satisfactory Treaty of Peace shall have been concluded.

Although the war in which I am engaged was brought on by events in the south of Europe, My attention has not been withdrawn from the state of things in the north ; and, in conjunction with the Emperor of the French, I have concluded with the King of Sweden and Norway a Treaty containing defensive engagements applicable to His dominions, and tending to the preservation of the balance of power in that part of Europe.

I have also concluded a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation with the Republic of Chili. I have given directions that these Treaties shall be laid before you.

*Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

The Estimates for the ensuing year will be laid before you. You will find them framed in such a manner as to provide for the exigencies of war, if peace should unfortunately not be concluded.

*My Lords and Gentlemen,*

It is gratifying to Me to observe that notwithstanding the pressure of the war, and the burthens and sacrifices which it has unavoidably imposed upon My People, the resources of My Empire remain unimpaired. I rely with confidence on the manly spirit and enlightened patriotism of My loyal Subjects for a continuance of that support which they have so nobly afforded Me ; and they may be assured that I shall not call upon them for exertions beyond what may be required by a due regard for the great interests, the honour, and the dignity of the Empire.

There are many subjects connected with internal improvement which I recommend to your attentive consideration,

The difference which exists in several important particulars between the Commercial Laws of Scotland and those of the other parts of the United Kingdom has occasioned inconvenience to a large portion of My subjects engaged in Trade. Measures will be proposed to you for remedying this evil.

Measures will also be proposed to you for improving the Laws relating to Partnership, by simplifying those Laws, and thus rendering more easy the employment of capital in commerce.

The system under which Merchant Shipping is liable to pay local dues and passing tolls has been the subject of much complaint. Measures will be proposed to you for affording relief in regard to those matters.

Other important measures for improving the Law in Great Britain and in Ireland will be proposed to you, which will, I doubt not, receive your attentive consideration.

Upon these and all other matters upon which you may deliberate, I fervently pray that the blessing of Divine Providence may favour your Councils, and guide them to the promotion of the great object of my unvarying solicitude—the welfare and the happiness of My People.

WAR-DEPARTMENT, February 5, 1856.

The Queen has been pleased, by an instrument under Her Royal Sign Manual, of which the following is a copy, to institute and create a new Naval and Military Decoration, to be styled and designated "The Victoria Cross," and to make the rules and regulations therein set forth under which the said Decoration shall be conferred.

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, &c.,

To all to whom these presents shall come, greeting.

WHEREAS We, taking into Our Royal consideration that there exists no means of adequately rewarding the individual gallant services either of officers of the lower grades in Our Naval and Military Service, or of warrant and petty officers, seamen, and marines, in Our Navy, and non-commissioned officers and soldiers in Our Army ; And whereas the Third Class of Our Most Honourable Order of the Bath is limited, except in very rare cases, to the higher ranks of both Services, and the granting of Medals, both in Our Navy and Army, is only awarded for long service or meritorious conduct, rather than for bravery in action or distinction before an enemy, such cases alone excepted where a general medal is granted for a particular action or campaign, or a clasp added to the medal for some special engagement, in both of which cases all share equally in the boon, and those who by their valour have particularly signalised themselves remain undistinguished from their comrades ; Now, for the purpose of attaining an end so desirable as that of rewarding individual instances of merit and valour, We have instituted and created, and by these presents, for Us, Our Heirs and Successors, institute and create a New Naval and Military Decoration, which We are desirous should be highly prized and eagerly sought after by the officers and men of Our Naval and Military Services, and are graciously pleased to make, ordain, and establish the following Rules and Ordinances for the government of the same, which shall from henceforth be inviolably observed and kept :—

Firstly. It is ordained that the distinction shall be styled and designated "The Victoria Cross," and shall consist of a Maltese Cross of Bronze, with Our Royal Crest in the centre, and underneath which an escroll bearing this inscription "For Valour."

Secondly. It is ordained that the Cross shall be suspended from the left breast, by a blue riband for the Navy, and by a red riband for the Army.

Thirdly. It is ordained that the names of those upon whom We may be pleased to confer the Decoration shall be published in the London Gazette, and a registry thereof kept in the office of our Secretary of State for War.