

The Belfast News-Letter  
Monday, March 11, 1861

NORTON'S PROJECTILES.—(CADELL & SON, GRAVES-  
END.)—Captain Norton is a retired Peninsular officer,  
now in his seventy-third year, who, for upwards of  
forty years has devoted a vast deal of time and inge-  
nuity to the invention and perfection of weapons of  
war. He hit upon the principle of the Minie rifle  
years before that arm was ever heard of. In the year  
1818 he had observed the expanding of the hollow  
plastic pith ball of the Malay tube arrow by the force  
of the collected breath of a practised person so as  
to fill the interior of the tube. It occurred to him  
that an elongated shot of plastic lead would also ex-  
pand by the force of the gas of exploded gunpowder,  
so as to fill the interior of a gun-barrel, and thus pre-  
vent loss of power by windage, or the escape of a  
portion of the gas between the shot and the interior  
of the barrel. He applied this principle to the rifle  
shell. Major-General Sir R. Airey, Quartermaster-  
General, bears testimony to the exhibition of these  
shot and shells at Woolwich as long ago as 1823, and  
pronounces them "identical in principle with the  
Minie bullet." Captain Minie was handsomely re-  
warded by the French Emperor. Captain Norton has  
received nothing for his services but coldness and  
contempt. This is the system in that "Augean  
stable," as Mr. B. Osborne called it, the Horse Guards.  
But Captain Norton did not confine himself to these  
two inventions. He invented new modes of ignition  
by concussion; a concussion fuze, self-exploding, a  
lady's grenade to be used against burglars; a spanker  
that can fire an ammunition waggon at 1,800 yards.  
Nor did he stop here. He applied his principle of  
self-ignition to railway signals, that can carry a  
letter across a river. He made a happy improvement  
in cartridges, to which he gave the name of gossamer  
cartridges. They ignite without the end being  
bitten, a process most distasteful to the soldier. A  
liquid fire rifle shell was another contribution to the  
arms of destruction. All these inventions have been  
perfected and tested and approved by competent  
judges. The only persons who throw cold water on  
Captain Norton and his ingenious inventions, are  
those who ought to be the very first to recognise  
and reward such talent. How long will the English  
people submit to have important and costly depart-  
ments managed by men utterly incapable of appre-  
ciating genius, possessed of no inventive talents  
themselves, and only bent on crushing every worthy,  
and swathing the establishment in red tape? Captain  
Norton rightly addresses his little work to the Vo-  
lunteers of the British dominions. They are men of  
free and independent minds, and will appreciate one  
whom the Horse Guards and the Board of Ordnance  
have passed by with a contemptuous and con-  
temptible disdain.