

of October, and Lord Derby concludes that it may have now reached the Government of Queensland. His Lordship desires me to add that there is nothing further to communicate on the points above mentioned, but that the subject is, of course, receiving continued attention.

The Agent-General for Victoria.

I am, &c.

JOHN BRAMSTON.

No. 12.

The AGENT-GENERAL for NEW ZEALAND to the PREMIER.

(Extract from Letter dated December 7, 1883.)

For other portions of this letter see A.—3B, No. 21.

As regards the Récidiviste Bill, it is still before the Committee of the Senate. The Agents-General, in their telegram to the Convention, suggested that it might be well to consider whether a direct representation should be made to the French Ministry before the Bill reaches a further stage. It is, of course, true, as the Convention pointed out in reply, that the British Government is the proper authority for making any representations to the French Ministry, and there are obvious inconveniences in going out of that course. At the same time, since circumstances have happened to impose upon me the task of examining into the causes which led to the introduction of the Bill, the arguments by which it was defended, the elaborate reports presented to the Chamber of Deputies, and the debates which took place in that Chamber, it may be excusable for me to say that, if there was anything of which, during that investigation, I became more persuaded than another, it was that the feelings of the Australasian colonists upon the question had never been guessed at, either by the promoters of the Bill or by its adversaries. I think it will take a good deal more than official remonstrances by the Foreign Office to induce the French Government to make any material alteration in the scheme, still less to withdraw it altogether: and, if so, we may have lost a favourable opportunity of making that kind of explanation to the French Ministers as to the gravity of the position in the eyes of Australasia, which we certainly cannot expect to be made in communications from Her Majesty's Government. It is now close upon six months since the Agents-General had their first interview with Lord Derby: it is nearly five months since his Lordship received, in our joint letter of the 21st July, a written remonstrance against the Bill: and it has been by the purest accident (the adjournment of the French Chambers, and the pre-occupation of French statesmen by political complications) that the Bill has not long ago become law. If during all that time the remonstrances of Her Majesty's Government have not been effectual on the Récidiviste question, I hardly think they will be much more effectual now in preventing the passage of the Bill. It is not necessary for me to point out that the principle of allowing direct representations to be made on the part of Colonial Governments to a Foreign Power is fully recognized by the Imperial Government. Sir Alexander Galt, High Commissioner for Canada, has more than once had conferences with the French Cabinet upon questions of political importance to the Dominion; and even in the lesser question of a postal line I was myself accredited by Lord Granville to M. Cochery, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. There would have been, therefore, no novelty in the course we suggested to the Convention.

No. 13.

The AGENT-GENERAL for NEW ZEALAND to the PREMIER.

PREMIER, New Zealand, Sydney.

Upon Lord Derby requiring me supply further evidence accuracy my statement *récidivistes* free on arrival, gave full extracts debates French Chambers, proving that, although Bill apparently stipulated internment within colony, clause empowered officials give permission quit; and that reiterated official declarations, *récidivistes* absolutely free: therefore, evident no real restraint. Said Australia must defend against such danger. Appealed behalf native races, permeated foreign criminals. Asked renewed remonstrance made French Government.

BELL.

London, December 5.

No. 14.

The COLONIAL OFFICE to the FOREIGN OFFICE.

SIR,—

Downing Street, December 5, 1883.

No. 8.

I am directed by the Earl of Derby to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23rd ultimo, transmitting a copy of the French Relapsed Criminals Bill.

No. 10.

2. With reference to this Bill, I am to transmit to you a letter from the Agent-General for New Zealand, in which, after describing the proceedings in connection with that measure, he calls particular attention to the fact that, if it becomes law in its present shape, it will provide for the transportation to islands near Australia of *récidivistes* of the worst character, who will be free on their arrival.

3. There is much apprehension and excitement in Australia and New Zealand as to the probable consequences of the Bill, if the powers to be conferred by it should be exercised in respect of New Caledonia and its dependencies; and, while Lord Derby does not suggest that Her Majesty's Government could interfere with the existing French penal settlement in New Caledonia, it appears to his Lordship that there is ground for a strong remonstrance against any material increase of the number of criminals to be sent thither, and more particularly against the proposal to include New