

Lord Lyons presented to M. Ferry some time ago; and this supposed note was even described very circumstantially. No such note, however, has, in point of fact, been delivered; and Lord E. Fitzmaurice, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said last night, in the House of Commons, that no communication of the kind had been received from the French Government.

You will also find among these extracts a sensible and interesting statement by the *Times* correspondent in Paris, pointing out that, if the *Récidiviste* Bill were to pass in its present form, and were made to apply to all the classes of offences it describes, the entire criminal population of France might soon be transported under it beyond seas.

The *République Industrielle* contained news the other day from M. Courmeaux, who, you will remember, was sent out last year on a special mission from the Minister of Marine and Colonies, respecting a proposal made by him to the Committee of Caledonian Interests for an immigration from the New Hebrides; and also one for the establishment of a new steam communication, whereby the Messageries boats would not go farther than Melbourne, but there would be a round service between Melbourne, Sydney, Noumea, and Auckland, cargo being transhipped at Melbourne. M. Courmeaux is further said to have asked the opinion of the Committee on the annexation of the New Hebrides, "taking full account of the grave diplomatic complications which would arise from such a step."

A notice was given last night by Mr. Gorst, M.P. that he will ask the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to give some information to the House upon the Bill, and it is Lord Rosebery's intention to call the attention of the House of Lords to it again presently.

In the meantime the French Chambers are still in recess, and nothing will be done till they reassemble and the Senate resumes the consideration of the Bill.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 1.

FRANCE AND THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIES.

SIR,—

To the Editor of the Times.

I shall be greatly obliged if you will afford one who has dwelt for more than thirty years in the Australasian Colonies, the opportunity of placing before the English public the real significance of the cloud, at present little bigger than a man's hand, which has arisen on our horizon.

Since the revolt of the North American Colonies, a century ago, no event has occurred so ominous to the future of the British Empire as the recently-disclosed determination of France to make use of the Islands of the Pacific as the receptacle of her criminal population, and that this is no exaggerated view of the result of that policy, it is the object of this letter to show. No event has produced a deeper feeling of indignation and alarm throughout the Australasian Colonies, and, if that feeling has not yet found more violent expression, it is because we have not as yet fully realized the effects of so wicked and inhuman a policy. It is not, however, with the terrible evils which must be entailed on the colonies by the success of the scheme of the French Government that I wish only or mainly to deal, but with the influence which, in my humble opinion, it must ultimately exercise on the relations of European States to their colonies and to one another, and on the interests of humanity at large.

Englishmen cannot have forgotten how their brethren on this side of the world resisted, and finally compelled the abolition of, the system of transporting the criminals of the Mother-country into their midst. They cannot have forgotten the closing scene of that drama, when the Cape Colony rose as one man, and refused to permit a cargo of convicts to be landed on its shores, nor how the Minister of that day wisely gave way to the storm which he had unwisely evoked in that feeble but resolute dependency. That which the colonies would not tolerate from their own Imperial Government, we are now informed we must submit to at the dictation of the French Republic. You are not unaware that a feeling of great dissatisfaction has been for some time growing in the Australasian Colonies, owing to the presence on their shores of convicts who have escaped from the French convict settlement of New Caledonia. These convicts are, however, presumed to be kept under sufficient restraint and seclusion by the Government of the settlement, and their presence among us to arise only from want of competent power or vigilance on the part of their keepers. The new scheme is of a different character. The *récidivistes* are, we are led to believe, to be sooner or later loosed from custody, and permitted to wander at their pleasure throughout the Islands of the Pacific. They are avowedly criminals of the worst class—professional rebels against all law and constituted authority.

I propose to inquire, what will be the result of this flight of ruffians let loose on the world, as affecting—(1) the aboriginal inhabitants of the Pacific Islands; (2) the colonists of Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, the Fijis, the Chatham, and other islands; and (3), what is far more important, the future relations of some European States.

First, as regards the native races, it is difficult calmly to contemplate the horrors which must ensue from turning loose this horde of miscreants among the islanders of the Pacific. We know by long experience how difficult it is to regulate the intercourse between savage and civilized races; what calamities have occurred, often through misunderstanding, sometimes in revenge upon the innocent for acts of wrong done by others; and what noble efforts have been made, and what valuable lives have been sacrificed, in the endeavour to reconcile the restless activity of the trader and the colonist, ever seeking fresh fields for his enterprise, with a due consideration for the rights of the aborigines, ever ready to resist aggression after the savage modes of native warfare. Apart from exceptional cases, the Europeans who have been brought in contact with the Australian, the Maori, and the South Sea Islander, have not been the worst or lowest of their race. Among them