

on with their work till it is finished. Although all the wisdom of French and British statesmen were concentrated upon the question, "What is to be done with the New Hebrides?" I am persuaded they could find no better solution than that.

There is floating in my memory just now the distant recollection of a story which I heard from the lips of Peter Latrobe, who use to visit Edinburgh on behalf of the Moravian Missionary Society. He told us of a certain West India island which had been purchased by a Danish merchant, who, when he came to consider how he was to govern it—by magistrates, soldiers, or police—determined to govern it by Moravian Missionaries. He placed fourteen of them over the negro population; but the malaria cut them down—~~twelve~~ out of the fourteen. He then removed the people, in whole or in part, burned their plains, consuming the poisonous vegetation and converting it into magnificent top-dressing for his sugar, and then replanted it with canes, and negroes and Moravian missionaries, who now found it a healthful, and made it a happy, home. Here was a Government by missionaries instead of magistrates. It was, I believe, an eminently successful mode, as it was unquestionably a very economical one.

As to the *récidivistes*: their coming will breed tremendous mischief, not for Australia only, but for Britain, and, in the end, for France. The first consequence will be a very determined effort on our part to counteract the evil working of the scheme. Whether these efforts are successful or are baffled, there will grow out of them a passionate hatred of the French, and an uncontrollable hostility to their presence in these seas; and this will lead in the end, however remote that end may be, to their expulsion from New Caledonia. Are the French so firm in their national stability—are they so girt about with friends—that they can afford to lose the friendship of Great Britain, or venture to provoke an open rupture with her? And for what? For the achievement of a stupendous piece of international wrong-doing. Sir, we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. How are the French going to fulfil that great commandment towards us? Thus—(1) They are going to give us 60,000 Frenchmen for our neighbours—not industrious peasants, whom we would welcome and seek to love, but the 60,000 worst men they have, the very dregs of French scoundrelism. (2) These men are to be put down beside us, as near as they can be put, right between Fiji and Australia; and they are to be put there—not as convicts under coercion, but as colonists, practically free. (3) As New Caledonia does not want them, and cannot sustain them, they are to be encouraged to go to the New Hebrides, where the Caledonian Company (in the hands of Mr. Higginson) will assist them to plant sugar, cotton, coffee, &c. (4) The labour they require will not need to be imported. It is lying at their hand. The natives will do their work—unwillingly, it may be, and under terror of the lash and the revolver. But these men will not stand upon trifles; and (5) when they are ripe for it, and when the "understanding" has become (and has been allowed by Britain to become) a hollow sham, or when England has accepted the bribe, suggested by M. Courmeaux, of being allowed to take peaceable possession of New Guinea and New Britain, then the French flag will be hoisted and the French authority established throughout the New Hebrides. And thus a French colonial empire is to be built up in the Western Pacific which shall outrun and overawe this Australian Dominion. Was ever so insane and flagitious a scheme hatched on this side of hell? An empire whose builders and makers are to be, not heroes, but criminals—untameable in France, but whom these warm skies and freedom, and ownership of land, and power of slaves, is to convert into orderly and honest men, and from whom are to spring the founders of a great nation! You have not forgotten, Sir, the tragical story of the "Bounty"—how the mutineers perished on Pitcairn Island, one by one, by their own or their comrades' blood-stained hands, till John Adams only was left, who, finding a Bible, managed to spell his way out of his utter wretchedness to the cross of Christ, and became, in the most marvellous fashion, teacher, minister, reformer, and patriarch of the little community whose descendants are now flourishing in New Norfolk. But what would Adams and his community have been to-day without that solitary Bible? Now, the *récidivistes* are going to bring here all their wickedness and murderous passions. I doubt whether they will bring even a single Bible to give any one of them John Adams's blessed chance.

Here I was about to conclude, but I find that I must advert to certain statements of M. Courmeaux, who has finished his very perfunctory tour of inspection in the islands, and has assured us, through the *Daily Telegraph* of yesterday, 28th April—

"1. That the New Caledonians are, with a few exceptions, opposed to the transportation of the *récidivistes* to their colony.

"2. That he is himself strongly opposed to it, and rather wishes the present convict element absorbed.

"3. But that, if possession of the New Hebrides is obtained by the French—which he thinks, as above mentioned, may be accomplished by friendly arrangement with Britain and mutual annexation—in that case, convicts might be introduced into the islands.

"4. Australia has nothing to fear from the *récidivistes*, as the system of precautions will be very stringent; and

"5. The number and danger of escapees are greatly exaggerated by us. During the last eleven years, forty-two escapees only have reached Queensland, nearly all of whom have been captured and taken back to New Caledonia."

Upon these statements I remark—

1. The people of New-Caledonia, while opposed to the *récidivistes* coming there, are anxious that they should come to the New Hebrides. (See *Neo-Calédonien*, 2nd April.) This, Britain must prevent.

2. The very same paper which publishes M. Courmeaux's assuring figures in regard to escapees, contains the announcement that, the day before, one vessel brought twelve of them from Brisbane to Sydney, *en route* for Noumea; and the *Telegraph* of this morning states that there are 247 escaped convicts known to be in the colonies at this moment, and 160 more suspected convicts, together 407.