

You will observe that, while Mr. Evelyn Ashley informed the House that the question of New Guinea was still before the Cabinet, he also said that Her Majesty's Government would not interfere to prevent legislation for the protection of Australasia against an influx of French criminals.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.

F. D. BELL.

### Enclosure.

[*The Times*, Tuesday, July 29.]

#### FRENCH CONVICTS IN AUSTRALIA.

MR. ERRINGTON asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, whether the attention of the Secretary of State had been called to the fact that, in addition to the influx into our Australian Colonies of casually escaped convicts from the French penal settlements, against which the colonists were constantly protesting, in April last the French Messageries steamer "Dupleix" landed openly at Sydney nine ex-convicts, the nature of whose sentence imported that they were only released from Noumea conditionally on their never returning to France; whether any, and what, steps were being taken to remonstrate with the French Government against the deliberate importation into the territories of a friendly Power of a class of criminals whom their own country would not receive, and among whom, according to the colonial authorities, "are found the criminals commonly known as récidivists, and undoubtedly the worst of their kind;" and whether, to put a stop to this practice, Her Majesty's Government would approve or recommend to the Colonial Governments legislation making it penal for the captain of any vessel, home or foreign, to land released convicts in any of the Australian Colonies.

MR. E. ASHLEY.—The attention of the Colonial Office has been called to the incident mentioned. Her Majesty's Government have been for many months in communication with the French Government on the general subject, and have reason to believe that their earnest representations are receiving serious consideration. It is, therefore, hoped that the necessity for legislation in the colonies may not arise; but Her Majesty's Government would not interfere with any reasonable measure that they might feel compelled to take for their own protection.

#### CONFEDERATION OF THE COLONIES.

SIR H. MAXWELL asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, whether it was true that the Legislative Assembly of Queensland had unanimously passed the Convention in favour of the confederation of the colonies, of the annexation of New Guinea and other Western Pacific islands, and of combined legislation against criminal aliens; and, if so, what was the attitude of Her Majesty's Government towards this policy.

MR. E. ASHLEY.—The facts are as stated in the honourable member's question. Her Majesty's Government have already signified their readiness to confirm and carry out by any necessary Imperial legislation the confederation scheme of the Sydney Convention, if, and when it is adopted by the different Colonial Legislatures, and Her Majesty's Government would not interpose should they combine in any well-considered legislation to protect themselves against criminal aliens. As to the other questions, all I can say at present is general, and that is that the whole matter is being considered by the Cabinet.

### No. 31.

The AGENT-GENERAL for NEW ZEALAND to the PREMIER.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W. 5th August, 1884.

I beg you to accept my sincere acknowledgments for your letter of the 21st June, referring to mine on the Recidivist Bill.

A question was asked last night in the House of Commons by Mr. Blake, whether Her Majesty's Government would pass the enabling Bill this session, as it had now been adopted by four of the Australian Governments represented at the Sydney Conference; when Mr. Gladstone replied that, if there was a prospect of the Bill passing unanimously, it might be brought in at once. I understand to-day that there are objections to this course, chiefly from members of the Conservative party. I enclose a report of what passed in the House.

Another question was asked a few nights ago by Mr. Errington, respecting the Recidivist Bill. I annex a report of what was said.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.

F. D. BELL.

### Enclosures.

[*The Times*, Tuesday, August 5.]

#### AUSTRALASIAN CONFEDERATION.

MR. BLAKE asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether, in view of the fact that four out of seven of the Australasian Colonies had agreed to proceed at once to confederate in an Australasian dominion, and of his statement that no business would be taken in the autumn session except the Franchise Bill, it might not be possible to introduce and pass an enabling Bill before the end of this session, so as to obviate the loss of a whole year, which would otherwise occur, in giving effect to the decisions of the Colonial Parliaments. The hon. member also asked whether the right honourable gentleman would undertake to introduce a Bill in the autumn session.