

Mr. GLADSTONE.—I can give no pledge at the present time with regard to the autumn session in deviation of what I have already stated. Of course, what I have stated will not bind the House or the Government in connection with cases at present unforeseen and of a sufficient magnitude to require that we should deviate from the policy already laid down. The question which is upon the paper asks, whether this important object of enabling the Australasian Colonies to confederate might be accomplished by the introduction of an enabling Bill in the present session. What I have to say in answer is, that it would not be right to introduce such a Bill and then to withdraw it. That would not be respectful to the colonies, nor would it be right; and to continue sitting until a Bill, if it were opposed, could be passed would be contrary to the pledge which the Government have given to the House not to proceed with contentious business at this period of the session. But if we could be assured that the House would give its unanimous assent to a Bill for the simply enabling purpose described in the question, I would agree to its introduction. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. BLAKE asked whether the right honourable gentleman would test the feeling of the House on the subject by introducing a Bill. (Laughter, and Hear, hear.)

Mr. GLADSTONE.—My honourable friend has not observed what I stated. He proposes that I should introduce a Bill to test the feeling of the House. But I observed that it would not be respectful to the colonies, and would not wear a friendly aspect, were I to introduce a Bill and then to withdraw it. I understand the honourable member to speak confidently for the quarter of the House with which he is connected, and so far I am well satisfied. I could not, however, at this moment inquire from right honourable and honourable members opposite what their views are, but I think it probable that in the course of the evening they may have the kindness to make their views known to us. (Hear, hear.) If it appears that there exists such a unanimous disposition as would alone justify the introduction of the Bill, notice of the Bill might be given this evening and it might be introduced to-morrow. (Hear, hear.)

[The Times, Saturday, August 2.]

FRENCH CONVICTS.

Mr. ERRINGTON asked the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs whether he could give the House any information as to the results of the remonstrance, which, in the interests of our Australasian Colonies, the Government had been making to the Government of France against the proposed wholesale deportation of French criminal classes to New Caledonia, and against the serious injuries which, even with their present limited development, the French penal settlements entail on our fellow-subjects.

Lord E. FITZMAURICE.—Her Majesty's Government have not yet received a reply to the representation which Her Majesty's Ambassador at Paris addressed to the French Government on the 23rd of May last, but it is probable that, before replying, they have awaited the report of the Committee of the French Senate upon the Bill relating to this matter. This report was only laid before the Senate on the 29th ultimo, and then ordered to be printed.

This question continues to engage the serious attention of Her Majesty's Government.

No. 32.

The PREMIER, Victoria, to the PREMIER, New Zealand.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Melbourne, 25th September, 1884.

I have the honour to forward herewith a copy of a letter, dated the 23rd August, 1884, from the Hon. the Colonial Secretary of Fiji, Suva, addressed to the Hon. the Premier of Victoria, Melbourne, on the subject of a contribution by Fiji to the New Guinea Protectorate Subsidy (£15,000). I enclose also a copy of my reply.

I have, &c.

The Hon. the Premier of New Zealand,
Wellington.

JAMES SERVICE,
Chairman of Convention's Committee.

Enclosure 1.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, Fiji, to the PREMIER, Victoria.

SIR,—

Fiji.—Colonial Secretary's Office, 23rd August, 1884.

I am directed by His Excellency Sir G. William Des Vœux, Governor of Fiji, to express to you his thanks for your courtesy in forwarding for his consideration the correspondence which has passed between you, as Chairman, and the other members of the Committee appointed by the recent Intercolonial Convention to watch over Australian interests.

His Excellency has read this correspondence with much interest, and desires me to say that, in his opinion, Australasia generally is much indebted to you and the other members of the Committee, who are taking an active part in matters which so deeply concern its welfare.

His Excellency is prepared to recommend to Her Majesty's Government the payment by Fiji of its proportional share of the £15,000, to be contributed temporarily by Australasia, to the additional expenses to be incurred by the Imperial Government in connection with New Guinea and Polynesia, but he has some difficulty with regard to the question of the amount of that share. According to the resolution of the Convention, the contribution of each colony was to be in proportion to its population. If, however, that of Fiji should have reference to its whole population, including the natives, it would involve a charge upon the resources of the colony very disproportionate to that borne by other colonies. If, on the other hand, the non-native population were alone considered, the contribution would be unduly small. For this reason, His Excellency is of opinion that the quota of Fiji would best be determined by the proportion which its revenue bears.