

what we think best to maintain our position in Pacific, and to protect the rights of the Presbyterian Mission.

5th April, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

### No. 28.

The PREMIER, New South Wales, to the PREMIER, New Zealand.

AM most anxious for a definite statement of your views as to the importance of cession of Rapa to England, as this is a question in which your colony is more deeply interested than any other. Should like an early and explicit cablegram from you, which I might publicly use.

3rd April, 1886.

P. A. JENNINGS.

### No. 29.

The PREMIER, New Zealand, to the PREMIER, New South Wales.

THE Government think the acquisition of Rapa most important to England on account of its harbour and position.

5th April, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

### No. 30.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 8th April, 1886.

No. 10,  
No. 8. Since I last wrote you regarding the Pacific question the agitation about the New Hebrides may be said to have advanced a stage. My letter dated the 27th February was generally approved of by the Victorian Government. The Victorian and Queensland Governments especially object to any compromise about the New Hebrides, and, just as I hinted in my previous letter, the strong feeling of the Presbyterian Church against any possible interference with their mission has been manifested in various quarters. As I pointed out, this Church has been exceptionally placed. It has not attempted to send missionaries to any field that was occupied by any other Church, and if its labours for years are to be interfered with by the handing-over of the New Hebrides to the French Government it will have a strong ground of complaint. If the New Hebrides must go I hope that you will use your best endeavours to see that every right or privilege that the Presbyterian Church now enjoys shall be maintained intact. Indeed, this ought to be a *sine quâ non* with the English Government. As I have said, Victoria and Queensland will listen to no compromise, and the threats made use of by the Victorian Premier are, I think, as unusual as they were uncalled for. I feel certain that the English Government is striving under very difficult circumstances to do its best for the colonies. The Pacific question has hitherto never loomed large in the eyes of British statesmen, and they are only now awakening to its full meaning, when I am afraid it is too late for any decisive action to be taken. There is no doubt that none of the Australian Colonies, except perhaps New South Wales, will listen to any compromise. The islands must either become British territory or remain, as at present, neutral ground. I do not know that I can add anything to what I have said about our position. We are just as desirous as the Governments of Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania that the New Hebrides should, if possible, become British territory; but, if they must go, then, as I have before stated to you, it is absolutely essential that some equivalent should be got, and that that equivalent should be Rapa. To us Rapa, as you know, is of immense importance. I forward you copies of resolutions passed by some of the Church courts of the Presbyterian Church, and also copy of telegrams and letters that have passed between the Victorian Premier and myself.

Regarding Samoa there have been no recent developments. Some of the German war-ships are now in Auckland on their way to the islands, and I expect that the "Nelson," with perhaps one or two other British vessels, will soon visit Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga.

I have received some information about the Deutsche Handel and Plantagenet Company. It appears to me that the company is not making much money for its shareholders. Indeed, as far as I can gather, there has only been a dividend of 4 per cent. on the "A" shares for 1884. The "B" shares, £125,000 in value, do not seem to have received any dividend.

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G., Agent-General.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT.

### Enclosure 1.

[Extract from the *New Zealand Times*, 8th April, 1886.]

#### THE PRESBYTERIANS AND THE NEW HEBRIDES.

AUCKLAND, 7th April.—The resolutions of the Auckland Presbytery, opposing French annexation of the New Hebrides, are to be forwarded to the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church for transmission to the Government, either singly or jointly, with other representations from the southern sections of the Church.

DUNEDIN, 7th April.—The following resolution was passed by the Dunedin Presbytery: "The Presbytery having had its attention called to the threatened annexation by France of the New Hebrides, it is resolved to urge the New Zealand Government to use its utmost endeavours to secure what the British Government has led the Australian Colonies to expect—namely, that the independence of these islands would be preserved, and the interests of the mission so successfully carried on by the Presbyterian Church be maintained; and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Hon. the Premier." Probably a public meeting on the question will be called.