

informed by Lord Rosebery of the nature of the answers from the colonies, and of their probable result, no formal reply had yet been given to the Government of the Republic.

A.—5c, 1886, No. 57, and No. 1.

The question, however, is virtually settled, and I must now recall the expressions in my letters of the 22nd and 23rd April, No. 517 and No. 529, which may have led you to believe that Her Majesty's Government would let the islands go to France. On the contrary, it will not be long before Lord Rosebery tells the Government of France that, as the assent of Australia to the cession is refused, the agreement for the independence of the islands must be maintained.

Of course, the question always was, which of two things was most important to Australasia: that transportation should cease in the Pacific, or that the Hebrides should go to France. The first of these two objects was ever the one that seemed to me to transcend every other in its bearing on the future of the Pacific, and to it I devoted every humble effort of which I was capable. For a moment it seemed as if the curse of transportation was to be lifted from that fair region; but we may see it descend more heavily than ever if what is passing now in France is any indication of the course that will be taken when the question comes before the Chambers. On this, however, I shall soon be writing to you again.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

### Enclosure.

[Extract from the *Times*, Friday, 14th May, 1886.]

#### THE AUSTRALASIAN CONVENTION.

MR. H. VINCENT asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether Her Majesty's Government considered the Mother-country bound to the first resolution of the Australasian Convention held in Sydney in 1883, "That further acquisition of dominions in the Pacific, south of the Equator, by any foreign Power would be highly detrimental to the safety and well-being of the British possessions in Australasia, and injurious to the interests of the Empire." And, in such case, whether in order to avoid any misunderstanding upon the subject, a notification to this effect had been or would be communicated to the Ambassadors and Ministers of foreign States.

MR. GLADSTONE.—The resolution to which the question of the honourable member calls attention is not, of course, in the nature of law, but is an expression of opinion by an important body. It is not in itself binding in any manner, even on the Colonial Government, much less on the Imperial Government. It is, however, an expression of opinion to which Her Majesty's Government would certainly have regard, according to the circumstances, as part of the matter for their consideration in any case that may arise and might seem to touch the resolution.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 15th May, 1886.]

#### THE NEW HEBRIDES.

MR. H. VINCENT asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether the French Ambassador had been given clearly to understand that Her Majesty's Government could not upon any consideration entertain His Excellency's proposals for the further acquisition by France of the New Hebrides Islands on the Australian coast, and the consequent abandonment of the valuable work of civilization among its independent native population of the British Presbyterian Church.

MR. O'MORGAN.—There appears to be some misunderstanding on this question both here and in the colonies. The facts are simply these: The French Government laid certain proposals before Her Majesty's Government, embodying a declaration that they would not send any convicts to the Pacific, and a consent on our part to the French Government occupying the New Hebrides. Her Majesty's Government were of opinion that this proposal, which would put an end to the question of sending any convicts to the Pacific, was worth full consideration, but that in no case could it be entertained excepting under three conditions: (1) That it provided full protection and freedom for religion and for trade in the New Hebrides; (2) that it was accompanied by the cession of the Island of Rapa; and (3) that the opinion of the Australasian Colonies, to which Her Majesty's Government attached the greatest importance, should first be ascertained. Lord Rosebery informed the French Ambassador that it was necessary to consult the Australasian Colonies, and that therefore no answer could be given till the end of April; but he did not disguise from the French Ambassador that in his opinion it was, to say the least, improbable that the colonies would assent to the French proposals. The telegraphic answers from the colonies are unfavourable, excepting those from New South Wales and New Zealand, of which the Governments are in favour of the plan. M. Waddington has been privately informed by Lord Rosebery of the nature of these answers and of the probable result, but no formal reply has been given, as the correspondence with the colonies is not yet complete.

### No. 8.

#### The SOUTHLAND PRESBYTERY to the PREMIER.

First Church, Invercargill, 2nd June, 1886.

THE which day the Presbytery of Southland met and was constituted. *Sederunt*: The Rev. A. H. Stobo, Moderator *pro tem.*, and Messrs. Cameron, Stevens, Ferguson, Gordon, &c. *Inter alia*, a motion was made by Mr. Ross *re* New Hebrides Islands, as follows: "The Presbytery, considering the interests of the New Hebrides natives, and also the labours and sacrifices of our missionaries there, unanimously protest against the annexation of these islands by the French; they likewise seek urgently to impress on our Government the necessity of using every means to prevent such annexation." The motion was unanimously carried, and ordered to be forwarded to the Premier.

Extracted from the records of Presbytery by

ALEX. BETHUNE,  
Presbytery Clerk.