

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 10th December, 1887.]

FRANCE AND NEW CALEDONIA.

Melbourne, 9th December.

THE announcement that 300 French convicts have embarked for New Caledonia is attracting considerable attention here, as it was hoped that when the New Hebrides question was settled France would cease to send convicts to the Pacific.

In yesterday's sitting of the Legislative Assembly the Hon. Duncan Gillies, replying to a question drawing attention to the cablegram announcing the intelligence, stated that he had requested the Governor to communicate with the Imperial Government with a view to ascertaining if the information were really true, and, if so, to represent to the French Government the deep feeling prevailing in the colony on the subject.

No. 9.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 12th January, 1888.

I beg to enclose a number of extracts from the *Times* and other papers relating to events which have lately happened in connection with the Pacific Islands.

The declaration of a French Protectorate over the Wallis group is only another step in the carefully designed and calculated policy which the Government of the Republic has been pursuing with regard to that region; and I cannot suppose you will have been at all surprised when the Press announcements of it appeared.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Monday, 2nd January, 1888.]

THE FRENCH IN OCEANIA.

Melbourne, 31st December.

A FRENCH Protectorate has been proclaimed over the Wallis Islands, in the South Pacific, and M. Chauvot, the French Resident, has been appointed Minister to the native Queen.

[Extract from the *Times*, Friday, 6th January, 1888.]

THE WALLIS ISLANDS.

THE latest annexation of France in the Pacific is a tiny group of islands, which would probably have been brought under French protection forty years ago had it not been for Louis Philippe's tenderness towards English susceptibilities. Probably recent German action with reference to Samoa has prompted the annexation, for a glance at the map will show that these islands are just on the western verge of the Samoa group. As, on the other hand, they lie at no very great distance to the north of Fiji, the strategical value of the position is evident. The Wallis Islands are, in fact, about half-way between Samoa and Fiji. The group consists of one small island and about a dozen tiny islets, all of them more or less surrounded by reefs. Unea, the largest, is only seven miles long, and 197 feet high near the centre, but is surrounded by a reef fourteen miles in extent north and south, and nine miles east and west. It lies about 13° 23' S., and 176° W. There are several entrances in the reef, but their navigation is somewhat difficult, so that the value of the islands as a harbour is somewhat doubtful. There are about 4,000 inhabitants on Unea, belonging to the finest of the Pacific races. While many of them are Protestant, the Roman Catholics have been long in the ascendant, and have, no doubt, a strong hold on the people. The island is the residence of a Roman Catholic bishop. It is magnificently wooded and traversed by numerous streams; in the interior is a beautiful lake, occupying the crater of an extinct volcano. The Queen, Amelia, is a devout Catholic, and there is no doubt that the Catholic missionaries have done much to improve and elevate the people. Unlike what is the case in many other Pacific islands, the population here seems to be on the increase.

[Extract from the *Times*, Monday, 26th December, 1887.]

FRANCE AND THE LOYALTY ISLANDS.

SIR,—

To the Editor of the *Times*.

Allow me to add a few words to the information given by your correspondent concerning the Loyalty Islands and the Rev. T. Jones, of the London Missionary Society.

A few years ago I made two visits to the Island of Maré, and on the second occasion spent five days with Mr. Jones at his pleasant mission-station. I was astonished at the very remarkable material results of the missionary work upon this island. The people had become fired with an amount of religious zeal very unusual in the Pacific. They had built a most imposing stone church without any external aid, having even purchased their own tools for the work. This was really a church, with stained-glass windows imported from Sydney and a small tower for a bell. They contributed some hundreds a year to the funds of the society to which Mr. Jones belongs. They paid all the expenses of the numerous native teachers who were stationed throughout the island. They had given Mr. Jones a purse containing £50 upon the twenty-fifth anniversary of his residence, which occurred that year, and they had even contributed 200 francs to the Indian Famine Fund. The tribute which my friend Mr. Penny (late of the Melanesian Mission) pays in your columns this morning to this gentleman, who in less catholic times would have been a rival missionary, is strictly just, and I am glad to be able to add my testimony.