

1888.
NEW ZEALAND.

PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF NEW HEBRIDES BY FRANCE.

(PAPERS RELATING THERETO.)

[In Continuation of A.—6, 1887, Session II.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 6th May, 1887.

At the Conference on the 26th April the Secretary of State laid before the Delegates the proposals of Her Majesty's Government relating to the New Hebrides.

I am not yet able to send you the confidential paper in which these proposals are stated, but I may give you the following brief summary of it.

After reciting the history of the understanding come to in 1878, and renewed in 1883, for the independence of the islands, and the proposals of the French Government in January, 1886, as well as the history of the military posts established last June, Her Majesty's Government stated that, while fully alive to the importance of maintaining the agreement of 1878–83 in its integrity, they were not entitled to object to any action which might be taken for the protection of French subjects and their interests in the New Hebrides, nor to dictate any particular time when the French troops must be withdrawn; nor did they think it necessary or desirable to place in the islands any corresponding detachments of British troops, in the face of the repeated assurances given by the French Government that there was no desire or intention on their part to infringe the agreement. But, as British interests ought to be maintained concurrently with French interests in the group, they had proposed to the Government of the Republic the appointment of a joint French and English Naval Commission for the protection of the subjects of both nationalities. This proposal was accepted by the French Government, who undertook that the evacuation of the islands by their troops should take place upon the settlement of regulations for the guidance of the joint Naval Commission. These regulations, with various draft bases of arrangements, and counter-proposals on each side, had been the subject of diplomatic communications between the two Governments for some months; and M. Flourens, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, had told Lord Lyons he was now on the point of sending instructions to the French Ambassador in London to bring the question to a settlement.

After hearing what the Delegates had to say on these proposals, Lord Salisbury made an explanation on the part of Her Majesty's Government. This will soon be communicated to you in a telegram, and therefore I do not refer to it further here.

On the 2nd May a discussion upon the New Hebrides question took place in the House of Lords, and I now transmit herewith a *Times* report of the debate. You will observe that Lord Salisbury announced that he was expecting to receive the promised communication from M. Waddington during this week, and I have no doubt of being able to telegraph its purport to you in a few days.

The discussion on the 26th April was renewed on the 28th, when the explanations given by Lord Salisbury were criticized by Mr. Service and other delegates, and supported in substance by Sir William Fitzherbert and myself. You will be glad to hear that in the end all the delegates expressed the opinion that the proposals of Her Majesty's Government should be accepted as a basis upon which to carry on the negotiations between the two Governments.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

1—A. 4.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Tuesday, 3rd May, 1887.]

HOUSE OF LORDS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

The Earl of HARROWBY, in rising to call attention to the condition of affairs in the New Hebrides, and to ask what course is proposed to be taken with reference to this subject by Her Majesty's Government, referred to the continued presence of British soldiers in the islands of the New Hebrides, although there stands on record a diplomatic understanding between France and England that neither Power should do anything in contravention of the independence of the islands. The subject, he said, was an important one from three points of view. In the first place, it was important from the native point of view; secondly, from the Imperial and Australian point of view; and thirdly, and still more important, because if it was the fact that French troops were still in occupation of these islands the sanctity of all international engagements was called in question, or, rather, would be called in question if such an occupation was sanctioned by the Government of France. He could not but believe that it was the rashness or over-zeal of local authorities which had kept French troops in the islands, for, unless he had strong evidence to the contrary, he should be very unwilling to suppose that the French Government would for one moment take the line of showing such complete disregard of international undertakings. The islands, he might remind their Lordships, were discovered in the first instance by Captain Cook, and under the charter of 1840 they were included in the Colony of New Zealand. They consisted of about thirty islands extending over a length of ocean of about four hundred miles north-and-south. They were extremely rich, were more healthy than the rest of the Pacific islands, and contained several valuable harbours. The population, numbering from one hundred thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand, were rapidly becoming civilised, and the story of their civilisation and christianization by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland was one of the most creditable in our history. So far as any European language went English was the only tongue known in the islands, and the feeling of the natives towards English people was exceedingly friendly. In every island an Englishman might go about unarmed, though he did not know that quite the same could be said with regard to other nationalities. Australia was especially interested in these islands from their proximity to her shores, and she was in a panic lest they should become the home of the lapsed criminals of France. In quite recent times both France and Germany had shown their appreciation of the strategic and commercial importance of the group. He thought we had a right, when we found those islands civilised entirely by British enterprise, christianized by Scotch enterprise, and wholly British in feeling, to protest against their being handed over to any other country. France, of course, would like to have the islands for a labour-supply to her colony of New Caledonia. That labour question in the Pacific was one of the most terrible blots in our modern civilisation. A French Admiral, who had held a high position in the Government, recently stated in the Senate that the labour that France got from the New Hebrides was simply another form of downright slavery; and that might be accepted as undoubtedly true. In the French Chamber it had been announced that New Caledonia could not take more convicts, and that it would be well if she could get them over to the New Hebrides. Anything more pitiable than such a result he could not imagine. What was the legal position now between France and England as to the New Hebrides? Lord Derby wrote to the Colonial Office in February, 1878, enclosing a letter from the French Ambassador, calling attention to articles in Australian newspapers advocating the annexation of the New Hebrides to the British Crown, and stating that, though the French Government did not attach great importance to this annexation movement, still, as they themselves had no intentions with regard to that group, they would be glad to have an assurance to that effect from Her Majesty's Government. Lord Derby informed the Colonial Office that he proposed, if they concurred, to inform the French Ambassador that Her Majesty's Government had no intention of proposing any measures to Parliament with a view of changing the condition of independence which the New Hebrides then enjoyed. The Secretary for the Colonies concurred in this answer. As time went on the feeling in favour of annexation became stronger and stronger in Australia, and alarmed the French Government. A communication was made to Her Majesty's Government that the Government of the Republic felt it their duty to ascertain whether the declarations of 1878 still remained as valid in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government as in that of France, as otherwise they would feel it their duty to insist on the maintenance of the existing state of things. In a despatch to Lord Lyons, the noble Earl who was then at the head of Foreign Affairs (Earl Granville) had said that the agreement of 1878 was considered by Her Majesty's Government to be perfectly valid. On the 31st August, 1883, the English Chargé d'Affaires informed Lord Granville that he had left at the French Foreign Office a *note verbale* to this effect. Lord Derby, when at the Foreign Office, had assured the Australian Colonies that no proposal for the annexation of the New Hebrides would be entertained without consulting the Australian Colonies, and also without securing conditions satisfactory to those colonies. When the noble Earl opposite (Lord Rosebery) had been Foreign Secretary an offer had been made by France to give up the transportation of relapsed criminals if she might take the New Hebrides. That was refused by the Australian Colonies on being consulted, and the noble Earl had then informed the French Government of that refusal. There the matter rested; but in June, 1886, without any formal annexation on the part of France, or without the central Government at Paris being in any way connected with the matter, French troops were placed on the island. From a letter which he had received from a well-known Scotch gentleman at Melbourne, he understood that the French still occupied a military station, and were erecting what appeared to be permanent buildings and putting up wooden sheds either for convicts or for additional troops. He had had another letter, dated the 6th December, 1886, from another Scotch gentleman at Havannah Harbour, Exatè, stating that on the 1st June a military post had been established in that harbour with over a hundred French marines, and immediately afterwards a

similar post had been established at Port Sandwich. He thought that these letters would justify him in bringing this matter before their Lordships' House. (Hear, hear.) It was a matter which ought to be decided quickly one way or another, and he thought that neither Government had shown any undue desire to press the matter. It might be said that this occupation had been rendered necessary on account of outrages, but he had made inquiries and had found that no serious cases of outrage had been brought home to the inhabitants of the New Hebrides. As often as not what were called outrages were the result of the abominable system of labour trade which prevailed in those parts. (Hear, hear.) He would therefore implore Her Majesty's Government, for the sake of the natives, for the sake of our Imperial and commercial interests, and for the sake of good faith in public international agreements, to take up this matter and bring it to a termination.

The Marquis of SALISBURY.—My noble friend has made a very interesting speech, and I only feel very great regret that it is not in my power to give him in return anything nearly so valuable or so interesting. The truth is, I heard with some dismay my noble friend go from point to point, but I have very little indeed to add to what he has said. He will understand that there are matters which he has discussed, and which he has a perfect right to discuss, but into which it would not be right for me to follow him. For example, I could not examine the motives which induced the French Government to attach value to the New Hebrides, and the same reason likewise precludes me from examining into motives which have induced the Australian Colonies to look upon these islands with exceptional interest. There is no doubt of the international state of the case—that France and England are engaged to each other not to annex the New Hebrides,—and it is also a fact that at this moment the French Government is in occupation of these islands, and that they have assured us, in tones whose earnestness and sincerity we have no right to doubt, that they have no intention of permanently occupying those islands, and no definitive character ought to be attached to their action. They inform Her Majesty's Government that they have been induced to take the step they have taken solely in consequence of outrages which have occurred. There have been outrages—we do not quite know how many, but undoubtedly certain persons in 1885 were killed, and several others wounded and attacked. The position of the French Government is that as soon as satisfactory arrangements can be made by which the police of the islands will be maintained and Europeans preserved from danger of outrage they would be glad to withdraw their troops. Her Majesty's Government have made proposals for the purpose of carrying this object into effect. These proposals have not been rejected, neither have they been absolutely accepted. Under the pressure of political events which have happened internally and externally in France, negotiations have not gone on with that rapidity which we should like to see. We have, on more than one occasion, called attention to the delay, and the French Government have always assured us that they were prepared to make proposals, and I believe that the French Ambassador is likely to make a communication of some importance in the course of the present week. I can make no further answer, except to assure my noble friend that I am as fully sensible as he is of the sacredness of the international engagement which prevents both one and the other country from occupying these islands, and Her Majesty's Government have no intention of departing on their side from that engagement.

The Earl of ROSEBURY thought that the statement of the noble Marquis would cause great disappointment in the Australian Colonies, and among those in this country who were interested in the question. He should be glad if the noble Marquis could state whether there were any ships of war in the vicinity of the New Hebrides, and whether Her Majesty's Government was represented by any naval force there.

The Marquis of SALISBURY said he could not answer the question without notice. It was his impression that some of Her Majesty's ships had been there from time to time. There was, however, no permanent station there, and he could not say whether there were any ships there at that moment.

The Earl of CARNARVON said no one in England who had followed these matters closely, and no one in Australasia, could regard the present state of things as satisfactory. With regard to these islands an understanding had, so far back as 1840, been come to between this country and the French Government that their independence should be respected. In 1858 a definite agreement to this effect was entered into, and that agreement had for years been recognised by successive English Governments and by the French Government. Now, however, after several years of *pour-parlers* on the subject, the French flag was to be found flying there. It was difficult to reconcile this with the amiable theory set up by his noble friend who introduced the subject that it might be the indiscreet act of some imprudent officer on a foreign station. This was not the first case of the kind that had occurred. There was another group of islands, well known to colonists and mariners—the Society group—one of which formed the subject in 1847 of a distinct reciprocal agreement between this country and France that its independence should be respected. Yet for the last five or six years the French flag had been flying upon it, notwithstanding all protests and complaints that had been received on the subject. These islands were at a great distance from England, and, with the multiplicity of political questions which occupied public attention here, events with regard to any one of these islands were very likely to escape attention. But for the colonies these things were matters of life and death. (Hear, hear.) He did not make any charge against the French Government—or even a complaint—it was very creditable to French policy and foresight; but if their Lordships took a map and referred to the present state of things in the eastern part of the South Pacific they could not fail to be struck with the enormous amount of the recent French annexations. (Hear, hear.) Tahiti, for instance, which some years ago nearly led to a collision between the two countries, was till lately under French protection. Recently the protectorate had been converted into sovereignty. Similarly the Society Islands, Rapa, the Austral group, and the mass of the islands that went by the name of the Lower Archipelago had, in recent years, been annexed. The

same state of things was being reproduced in the Western Pacific, where Australian interests mainly lay. (Hear, hear.) There was the great French colony of New Caledonia, which was peopled by convicts. Then there were the Loyalty Islands, and if the New Hebrides were to be placed under French jurisdiction then there would be a stretch of the intervening islands between Australia and Fiji all under the French flag. However we in this country might regard this, the people of Australia could not regard the prospect without considerable anxiety. He could not say exactly what were our precise relations with other countries with which we came into contact in the Pacific. No one who was not in office could exactly tell. But he had no reason to believe these relations were otherwise than satisfactory. About three years ago their Lordships might remember that an important agreement was come to between this country and Germany, by which the two Governments agreed to delimit their jurisdiction—their spheres of influence, it would be more correct to say—in the South Pacific. The result of this had been that so far as Germany was concerned the chances of friction had been very much lessened. He would throw out for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government the suggestion whether some such understanding might not be arrived at with France. (Hear, hear.) The noble Earl pointed out strong reasons why this matter should be satisfactorily settled without delay. There were two special reasons for this. It was a question that closely affected the natives of the South Pacific. He, about 1876 and 1877, was the author of two Acts which created the office of High Commissioner, with jurisdiction to deal with all cases of outrages on natives, especially such as arose out of the labour traffic. Those Acts had done great good, but they had not altogether attained their object. It was not possible for the British Government to give the High Commissioner jurisdiction over foreigners or natives in any but British islands. It would be well if some system of co-operation or joint action could be arranged. There used to be a mixed slave-trade Court which worked very well in the slave-trade days. There was another reason which rendered the settlement of the matter urgent—namely, the *récidiviste* question in New Caledonia. That was a very large and important question, and one that had moved the Australian public mind to its lowest depths. (Hear, hear.) Until this question of the New Hebrides, with which it was connected, should have been settled it would remain, he feared, a burning question, containing in itself the germs of future trouble and anxiety. (Hear, hear.)

Earl GRANVILLE.—I rise to express my gratification that, being in office, the noble Marquis seems to think that there is some weight in the principle which I laid down that an answer should not be hastily given without notice to questions relating to important foreign affairs. There is still this difference between us, however: When I laid down that principle I adhered to it, and did not answer questions until after notice, whereas the noble Marquis, after enunciating the principle, has really told us how the matter stands to which the question put to him refers. There is certainly no one more anxious than I am to avoid causing any feelings of unnecessary excitement between our great neighbours the French and ourselves. (Hear, hear.) The proof of this is that when we first received the news of the landing of French troops, and considered the advisability of sending immediately ships of war to the scene, we determined it was better not to do so. A short time afterwards, however, we agreed that it was desirable to send British ships, not as a menace or in any spirit of hostility, but in order to put the two countries on the same footing. Since then, as far as I know, the occupation has been consistently discountenanced by the French Government, who have always given us assurances that they do not approve the occupation of the New Hebrides, and that they intend to adhere to the international agreement. Last year the noble Earl near me repeated that assurance, which he had recently received from the French Government. But now that this French occupation of the shore has gone on, not only for weeks and months, but for more than a year, a change in our policy and a reversal of the order that ships shall be on the spot may exercise an unfavourable impression, especially on the colonial mind. In conclusion, let me say that no one can desire more heartily than myself that the communications between the Governments may lead to a really satisfactory result for the French nation, ourselves, and our colonial fellow-subjects. (Cheers.)

[Extract from the *Times*, Tuesday, 3rd May, 1887.]

THOUGH the official reports of the meetings of the Colonial Conference are confined to a formal record of the proceedings, it is no secret that the Conference has so far proved a conspicuous success and has already achieved substantial results. For this the credit must be divided between the members of Her Majesty's Government, especially Sir Henry Holland, whose courtesy and capacity have won golden opinions from the Colonial Delegates, and the Colonial Delegates themselves, to whose statesmanlike attitude Lord George Hamilton paid a merited tribute on Saturday at the Royal Academy banquet. The First Lord of the Admiralty also took advantage of the same occasion to give some account of one of the chief results achieved by the Conference in relation to his own department. The colonies have been invited to join the Mother-country in a species of naval partnership, and they have readily responded to the invitation, with the result that a scheme has been matured—subject to the approval of the Parliaments of the colonies concerned—which will place one-fourth of Her Majesty's colonies and the Mother-country in a very different position from that which they have hitherto occupied so far as naval defences are concerned. The arrangement, said Lord George Hamilton, will make a substantial addition to the effective strength of the fleet, and will bring the Australasian Colonies into financial partnership with the Mother-country in supporting the cost of the Imperial Navy. Other questions of equal moment to the several colonies have been and will be discussed, and in general it may be affirmed that, so far as they have been settled, it has been found possible to reach conclusions acceptable to all parties concerned. It is not easy to overrate the importance of discussions of this kind, not merely for the positive results which they achieve, but for the spirit of friendly co-operation which they engender. "It was certain," said Lord Rosebery on Friday, "that when the leading representatives of the colonies

came together, as they had done, something further would be accomplished in the direction of welding and uniting the Empire." In this respect alone, to say nothing of tangible results, the meeting of the Conference and its harmonious proceedings mark an epoch in the national history.

One matter, however, among those which have so far engaged the attention of the Conference, has, we believe, presented itself more or less in the light of a difficult and burning question. There is no doubt that the continued presence of French troops in the New Hebrides is regarded by the representatives of the Australasian Colonies with very serious concern. This question was yesterday made the subject of a short but interesting conversation in the House of Lords. Lord Harrowby asked what course the Government proposed to take in the matter, and gave a lucid exposition of the recent history and present bearings of the question. The Colonial Conference was not mentioned in the debate, though the official reports of the proceedings have shown that the questions connected with the New Hebrides have on two separate occasions been discussed at considerable length by the Conference. The whole question is one which touches the Australasian Colonies very closely. There is no doubt whatever as to its international position. Since 1878 France and England have been under a reciprocal engagement not to annex the New Hebrides; but for more than a year French troops have been in occupation of certain positions in the islands. The French Government have explained that the troops were originally sent in consequence of outrages perpetrated by the natives in 1885, when certain French subjects were killed and several others wounded and attacked. "They have assured us," said the Prime Minister, "in tones whose earnestness and sincerity we have no right to doubt, that they have no intention of permanently occupying those islands, and that no definitive character ought to be attached to their action." If England alone were concerned, this assurance might suffice. But the colonies are more urgent in desiring a speedy and satisfactory settlement, and we believe that on this point a warm discussion took place in the Conference, the results of which may, no doubt, be discerned in the Prime Minister's statement that he expected the French Ambassador to make a communication of some importance in the course of the present week. Lord Salisbury declined—very properly, no doubt, in the present condition of the question—to go into detail about the matter. But his statement was somewhat hesitating, and was received with some expressions of dissatisfaction and disappointment by Lord Rosebery and Lord Granville, who have both had official cognisance of the question. "I can make no further answer," said the Prime Minister, "except to assure my noble friend that I am as fully sensible as he is of the sacredness of the international engagement which prevents both one and the other country from occupying these islands, and Her Majesty's Government have no intention of departing on their side from that engagement." This, however, is, as matters stand, rather a one-sided explanation, and, as such, it is scarcely calculated to reassure our colonial fellow-countrymen. The French troops are now in possession of certain positions on the islands, and have been in possession for more than a year. At one time, as we learn from Lord Granville, British ships of war were ordered to the scene of the French occupation, "not as a menace or in any spirit of hostility, but in order to put the two countries on the same footing." It does not, however, appear that any ships are there at the present moment, though Lord Salisbury declined to give, without due notice, a definite answer to the question addressed to him by Lord Rosebery on this point. We shall accordingly await with some interest the further explanations of the Prime Minister. In these circumstances we can well understand the anxiety felt on this subject by the Australian Colonies, and expressed by their Delegates at the Conference. The question is with them, as Lord Carnarvon said, a burning question, containing in itself the germs of future trouble and anxiety. No one would attribute to them a disposition to press unduly on the French Government or to act in an unfriendly spirit. But they are naturally more impatient, not to say irritated, than we are at an occupation which has now been continued for more than a year, and to which, so far, no definite term has been assigned.

It is impossible to feel surprise at the existence of this feeling in the Australasian Colonies, or at its manifestation at the Conference. The main purpose of the Conference is to make the Imperial Government better acquainted with colonial feeling on colonial questions, and to inform the colonial Delegates as to the real drift and purpose of Imperial policy. We believe that in this latter respect much good will be found to have been done by the frank explanations offered by Her Majesty's Government to the Delegates in regard to the international aspect of questions concerning Samoa and New Guinea—explanations which have tended to remove much misconception, and have given great satisfaction to the Delegates. To a certain extent the same results may be expected to follow in time from the discussion of the question of the New Hebrides. The Government now clearly understand the strong views entertained by the colonies on this question, and the great importance they attach to its speedy and satisfactory settlement. The explanation and justification of these views are fully set forth in the speeches of Lord Harrowby and Lord Carnarvon. The colonies have watched for some years with much concern the gradual extension of French occupation and influence in the Pacific. They may perhaps be over-sensitive in the matter. There is room for more than one nationality in the Pacific, and the Australasian nationality of the future may perhaps be all the stronger and richer for the infusion of a variety of European elements. But the extension of the area of French occupation in the Pacific is inseparably connected with two questions which touch the Australasian Colonies very closely, and indeed vitally. These are the questions of the labour traffic and of the *récidivistes*. As to the former, it is sufficient to refer to the statement of a French Admiral recently made, according to Lord Harrowby, in the Senate, that the labour that France gets from the New Hebrides is simply another form of downright slavery. The record of the Australian Colonies is not without reproach in this matter, but their conscience is now awakened, and they may well be excused for thinking that the taint of slavery in any form would be fatal to the future civilisation of the Australasian world. The *récidiviste* question is even more serious. The French acknowledge that New Caledonia can take no more convicts, and the Austra-

lians not unnaturally fear that they are hankering after the New Hebrides for the purpose of establishing new convict settlements there. This would be intolerable. No one can blame the Australians for protesting with all their strength against any further attempt of France to pollute the young and healthy civilisation of the Southern Hemisphere with the worst dregs of her own criminal population; and, as in the case of the New Hebrides their protest stands on the acknowledged ground of international engagements, they may be excused for pressing it with some urgency. They must be content to bear with such patience as they can command the extension of French influence in such directions as are not covered by international engagements and understandings; but in the case of the New Hebrides they are supported alike by international right repeatedly acknowledged by France and by the strongest considerations of sound colonial policy. We trust, therefore, that the communication which Lord Salisbury expects to receive from M. Waddington will be found to offer a near prospect of an amicable and satisfactory settlement. Lord Salisbury explained that the position of the French Government is that, as soon as satisfactory arrangements can be made by which the police of the islands can be maintained and Europeans preserved from danger of outrage, they would be glad to withdraw their troops. The view of the Australian Colonies probably is that the French Government is less concerned with the police of the islands than themselves, and that, as England is under an obligation not to occupy, so France is under a corresponding obligation to retire, not conditioned by any solicitude for the security of Europeans, other than Frenchmen, resident there. This view seems to us to be not unreasonable, and, though we share to the full Lord Granville's anxiety to avoid causing any feeling or unnecessary excitement between our great neighbours the French and ourselves, we must say that the continued presence of French troops in the New Hebrides would be rightly regarded by our Australian fellow-countrymen with grave apprehension and not a little impatience.

[Extract from the *Times*, Wednesday, 4th May, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 3rd May.

THE *Temps* this evening, in an article on the New Hebrides question, declares that there are three solutions possible—namely, the declaration of their absolute independence, a protectorate by one Power or the other, and finally a joint surveillance by France and England over the islands, which would in that case remain independent.

The journal thinks that the third plan will probably be adopted, with, possibly, some slight modifications.

[Extract from the *Standard*, Thursday, 5th May, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

(From our Correspondent.)

Paris, Wednesday night.

THE London correspondent of the *Temps* has had a conversation with Sir Francis Bell, Agent-General in London for New Zealand, and Delegate for that colony at the Colonial Conference. Sir F. Bell commenced by saying he intended to write to the *Temps* relative to the New Hebrides question, but in the meantime he affirmed that he was personally favourable to M. Waddington's proposal. The refusal of that proposal by Australia had, however, rendered everything impossible except the complete independence of the New Hebrides. Sir F. Bell, nevertheless, is reported to have expressed the conviction that, even under that condition, there were things which might be done that would not only be advantageous to France and the English colonies, but would result in strengthening the cordial understanding between France and England. If France would withdraw her convicts from the neighbourhood of Australia, Sir F. Bell is represented as having told the *Temps* correspondent that Australia would, perhaps, be the first to congratulate herself on having the French as neighbours.

[Extract from the *Times*, Friday, 6th May, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 5th May.

THE *Temps* this evening publishes a telegram from London of to-day's date stating that it is believed that M. Waddington, the French Ambassador, is about to propose the appointment of an Anglo-French Naval Commission for the protection of the New Hebrides. This proposal would probably be accepted by the English Cabinet as a more logical solution of the question than a joint occupation of the islands by British and French troops.

The Australians on their part, adds the telegram, are apprehensive of the consequences of European complications in Australasia in the event of an outbreak of hostilities, and it is against such a contingency that they wish to protect themselves.

No. 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 6th May, 1887.

No. 1. Since writing to you this morning I asked at the Conference for permission to send out copy of the paper laid before us by the Secretary of State containing the proposals of Her Majesty's Government relating to the New Hebrides. I accordingly enclose copy herewith.

The paper went out to the Governors of the Australasian Colonies in despatches from the Secretary of State by last week's mail.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure.

NEW HEBRIDES.—COLONIAL OFFICE MEMORANDUM.

IN January, 1878, the French Ambassador at this Court drew the attention of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to certain articles which had appeared a short time previously in the Australian Press advocating the annexation of the New Hebrides to the British Crown, with the view of forestalling any action which might be taken by the French Government in that direction.

Comte d'Harcourt stated that, without attaching much importance to this movement, his Government felt bound to declare that they had no intention of interfering with the independence of the group, and added that they would be glad to be informed whether Her Majesty's Government were equally disposed to respect that independence.

The reply of Her Majesty's Government was to the effect that they had no intention of proposing any measures to Parliament with the view of changing the condition of independence enjoyed by the group.

This correspondence was sent to the Governors of the Australasian Colonies, and forms the understanding—often referred to, and expressly renewed in 1883, by the exchange of *notes verbales*—on which Her Majesty's Government have relied when any apprehensions have arisen in Australia or elsewhere owing to the attitude assumed by the French colonial Press, or the movements of French vessels of war.

In January, 1886, the French Government inquired whether Her Majesty's Government would consent to waive their objection to the establishment of French sovereignty in the New Hebrides, if the French Government would pledge themselves not to send any more convicts to any place in the Pacific. Having regard to the strong protests of the Australasian Colonies against the continuance of transportation, Her Majesty's Government felt that this proposal deserved serious consideration, especially if the French Government should also be willing to cede the Island of Rapa; but, in view of the repeated assurances given to the colonies to the effect that the understanding arrived at by the two Governments would be maintained, Her Majesty's Government felt themselves precluded from entertaining any such proposal without first consulting the colonial Governments. The colonies were consulted, and objected to the proposal, which has consequently lapsed.

In June, 1886, Her Majesty's Government received telegrams from Australia reporting that French vessels had left New Caledonia for the New Hebrides with troops, provisions, and materials for barracks.

On reference being made to the French Government, it was explained by M. de Freycinet that in consequence of outrages committed by the natives of the New Hebrides upon French subjects engaged in working for a French company, which had appealed for protection to the Governor of New Caledonia, it had become necessary to send two ships with troops. These were intended to proceed to the localities in which Frenchmen were in danger, and, if necessary, to land troops and retain them there until the danger should be past and tranquillity restored.

It was stated that this intelligence had been telegraphed by the Governor of New Caledonia to the French Minister of Marine.

M. de Freycinet added that possibly a temporary post might be established until calm should be restored, but that the measures adopted were without any political significance; and he stated explicitly that there was no question whatever of occupying the New Hebrides, nor was there any intention to depart from the obligations contracted by France towards Great Britain as regards the independence of the group.

A telegram from the Governor of New Caledonia was sent from Sydney on the 15th July, 1886, to the French Minister of Marine, giving a list of the agents of the French company killed by natives in the New Hebrides. They were: One in 1882, two in 1883, three in 1884, seven in 1885, two in 1886: total, 15.

In addition to these, some other persons had been wounded or attacked.

Her Majesty's Government, while fully alive to the importance of maintaining in its integrity the understanding above referred to, were not entitled to object to any action which the French Government might take for the protection of French subjects or their interests in the New Hebrides, nor to define a time at which the French troops should be withdrawn, nor did they think it necessary or desirable to place in the islands corresponding detachments of British troops, in the face of repeated assurances from the French Government that there was no desire or intention on their part to infringe the understanding. They felt it, however, to be advisable that British interests should be maintained concurrently with French interests in the New Hebrides; and, accordingly, in the autumn of last year they proposed that a joint French and English Naval Commission should be appointed for the protection of French and English subjects.

This proposal was accepted by the French Government, who undertook that the evacuation of the islands by the French troops should take place upon the approval by both Governments of regulations for the guidance of the joint Naval Commission.

Draft bases of arrangement were forwarded by Her Majesty's Government for the consideration of the French Government in October last, and on the 1st November the French Government communicated certain counter-proposals, which were considered by Her Majesty's Government and in part accepted. The reply on this subject was made to the French Ambassador on the 26th November, and during a considerable interval no further communication was received from the French Government, in consequence, as it is understood, of the political changes in France. A despatch was addressed by Lord Salisbury to Lord Lyons on the 19th February, expressing regret that no reply had been received, notwithstanding the friendly attitude assumed by Her Majesty's Government, and pressing for an answer.

To this the French Government have replied that an answer might be expected almost immediately.

Lord Lyons has also stated in a despatch of the 9th March that M. Flourens had informed him that he had examined the proposed text of the arrangement to be made, and that he was on the point of sending instructions on the subject to the French Ambassador in London. Lord Lyons strongly urged that there should be no further delay on the part of the French Government.

Colonial Office, 23rd April, 1887.

No. 3.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—
No. 1. 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 18th May, 1887.
My letter of the 6th instant, No. 704, brought up the account of what had been done at the Conference up to that date respecting the New Hebrides.

The publication of the unauthorised account of the Conference proceedings, which appeared in the *Standard* on the 5th instant, attracted some attention, and a debate took place next evening in the House of Lords, of which I send you a *Times* report. Lord Rosebery asked whether the *Standard's* account was authentic, repudiating for his own part any connection with the French Ambassador's proposal of last year for the cession of the islands to France, beyond the fact of that proposal having been submitted to him while Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Lord Onslow (Under-Secretary for the Colonies) replied that the *Standard* article substantially represented what had taken place, but was in some important respects inaccurate and misleading, adding that a general disposition had been expressed by the delegates to accept the proposals of Her Majesty's Government as a satisfactory basis. Lord Onslow promised to lay before Parliament a full report of what had, taken place; and, on Lord Rosebery asking whether the papers would contain the speeches of the delegates, he said the reports would be almost if not entirely *verbatim*.

On the same evening (6th May), in the House of Commons, Sir H. Holland also promised that an accurate account of all the proceedings of the Conference should soon, with the full assent of the Delegates, be presented, excepting only anything of a strictly confidential character.

But hardly had these promises been given in both Houses when a serious question arose as to how far it would be right to publish the Conference speeches on the New Hebrides question at all. Lord Salisbury's address had been a very outspoken one, and had been criticized by Mr. Service and Sir Graham Berry with equal frankness, and strongly defended by the New Zealand Delegates. Everybody knew that something would have to be left out of the speeches before they could be published, but, when it came to the point of what should be left out, so much difficulty occurred that at last Sir Henry Holland had to tell the House of Commons (on the 13th instant) that it might be necessary after all to omit the New Hebrides proceedings altogether from the published records of the Conference. Nothing, however, has been finally settled even yet.

In the meantime, however, the negotiations between the English and French Governments have advanced a stage, and the French note has been delivered to Lord Salisbury. I think you may now look upon it as certain that a satisfactory arrangement will be made. It was supposed that any announcement of a final refusal to cede the New Hebrides would be very badly received in France; but there now appears to be no disposition to quarrel with it there, as you will see from the extracts of French papers annexed to this letter.

I do not allude further to the subject now, because Her Majesty's Government will soon decide whether the speeches in Conference are to be made public or not. If they are, you will be able to judge whether the support given by Sir William Fitzherbert and myself to Her Majesty's Government was not fully justified: if they are not, it will then become my duty to ask permission to send you an account of what took place. But of this you may in any case be quite sure: that the discussions at the Conference have had on the whole an excellent result, for they have brought about a general assent on the part of the Delegates to the proposals of Her Majesty's Government, and have helped to lay the foundation at last of a settlement which, while maintaining the treaty of 1878-82, will open the islands to colonisation by English and French alike, and secure for all not only equality in trade and commerce, but a reasonable protection for life and property.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 7th May, 1887.]

HOUSE OF LORDS.—THE COLONIAL CONFERENCE.

The Earl of ROSEBERY.—I rise to ask the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies a question of which I have given him private notice. It refers to the report of the proceedings of the Colonial Conference which appeared in the *Standard* this morning. It is a very interesting and detailed account, and I shall be glad to learn if the noble Earl thinks fit to tell me whether it is authentic or not. In the next place I wish to know if, in view of the somewhat premature publication, it is proposed to give us the real and actual papers with regard to what has passed in the Conference. I do not know what the authenticity of the *Standard's* account may be; but, at any rate, it seems to me very desirable that, having had four columns of the proceedings of the Colonial Conference published in a newspaper, some more authoritative account should be supplied to the Houses of Parliament. I do not ask for all the somewhat spicy details published in the *Standard*—the interview, for instance, of the Prime Minister with the colonial representatives; but of course we should be glad to have as much detail as possible. There is one point in connection with the account which I will ask your Lordships' permission to say a word or two about. There is a proposition with regard to a compromise with which my name is associated—that, in exchange for the cession

of the interests of this country in the New Hebrides, France will undertake not to send convicts to the Pacific. That proposition was officially made to me; but I wish to state most distinctly that it is the only connection I have with it, and that the idea of calling it a proposition made by me is one which I wish most distinctly to repudiate.

The Earl of ONSLOW.—The account of the proceedings at the Colonial Conference which appears in the *Standard* substantially represents what took place. At the same time, however, it is inaccurate in some important details, and it is so incomplete as to give a misleading impression of the conclusion arrived at as to some of the most important subjects which were discussed. I might especially refer to the question referred to by the noble Earl with regard to the New Hebrides, as to which there is no report whatever of the very able speeches which were delivered by the representatives of New Zealand in favour of the proposals made by Her Majesty's Government before the Conference. I believe I am not inaccurate in saying that there was a general disposition expressed on behalf of the Delegates present to accept as satisfactory the action of Her Majesty's Government. We are most anxious to lay on the table of both Houses of Parliament at the earliest possible date a full account and report of the proceedings of the Conference. Some of these are already in print, and others are in the printers' hands. The noble Earl will understand that it will necessarily take some short time for the different Delegates to revise the reports in order that they may be in every respect accurate. As soon as that is done, and after the conclusion of the Conference early next week, papers will be laid before Parliament which will give a complete account of both the principle and the details. Whether they may be spicy or not, they will be placed in the hands of your Lordships to pronounce an opinion upon, and I may just hope that the day is not distant when we may be able to present them to Parliament.

The Earl of ROSEBURY.—Will the papers contain reports of the speeches of the Delegates?

The Earl of ONSLOW.—The reports will be almost if not entirely *verbatim*. (Hear, hear.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—THE COLONIAL CONFERENCE.

Mr. PAULTON asked the Secretary for the Colonies whether the account in the *Standard* to-day of the proceedings of the Colonial Conference had been published with the authority of the Colonial Office, and whether it was correct.

Sir H. HOLLAND.—I much regret that this account of the proceedings of the Conference, which is inaccurate in many particulars and very incomplete, has appeared in the *Standard*. It has no official authority, and has not been sanctioned by the Colonial Office. (Hear, hear.) I have made and am making inquiry into the matter. I may add that at the earliest opportunity I shall, with the full assent of the Delegates, present a revised account of all the proceedings and papers except such as are of a strictly confidential nature. (Hear, hear.)

[Extracts from the *Times*, Wednesday, 11th May, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 10th May.

THE *Temps* this evening believes that M. Waddington, the French Ambassador in London, will to-day come to an understanding with Lord Salisbury relative to the New Hebrides question.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—NEW GUINEA.

Mr. W. JAMES asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether the Government had come to any understanding with the Colony of Queensland as to the future administration of New Guinea; and, if so, what stipulations had been made on behalf of the native inhabitants of the protected territory.

Sir H. HOLLAND.—The scheme proposed by Her Majesty's Government with respect to the government of New Guinea has been laid before the Delegates at the Conference and approved by them, but the sanction of the different Colonial Governments and Legislatures is of course required. Till communications have been made to those Governments it is not desirable to enter into details, but I can assure the honourable member that full protection has been given to native interests.

[Extract from the *Times*, Friday, 13th May, 1887.]

ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

Paris, 12th May.

THE *Temps* this evening states that yesterday's interview between M. Waddington, the French Ambassador in London, and Lord Salisbury resulted in a resolution that both Governments should arrive at an understanding upon the questions relating to the neutralisation of the Suez Canal and the New Hebrides.

The only point now remaining to be discussed is the form to be taken by the agreement.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 14th May, 1887.]

ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

Paris, 13th May.

THE *Temps* this evening believes that the English and French Governments will come to an arrangement on the Suez Canal and New Hebrides questions before the end of the week.

[Extract from the *Times*, Wednesday, 18th May, 1887.]

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—FRANCE AND THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Sir J. GOLDSMID asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies what notice had been taken of a petition, dated September, 1863, and presented to Her Majesty by Lord Normanby on his return to England, addressed to her by the chiefs of the Island of Tanna, in the New Hebrides, objecting to

French annexation, and saying that if the island was to be annexed by any civilised Power they would prefer it to be the Australian Colonies.

Sir H. HOLLAND.—The honourable baronet probably refers to a petition which was received in June, 1884, as an enclosure to a despatch from the Acting Governor of Victoria. Lord Normanby does not appear to have been concerned with it in any way. The petition was forwarded at the request of a Mr. Thomas, correspondent of the Melbourne *Argus*, who seems to have been mainly instrumental in getting it up, and who witnessed the marks attached to it by the natives of Tanna. Lord Derby informed the Acting Governor, in reply, that he had laid the petition before the Queen, but had not been able to advise Her Majesty to take any action in reference to it; and that Her Majesty's Government had no reason to suppose that the French Government had any intention of taking possession of the Island of Tanna.

No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 10th August, 1887.

I beg to enclose *Times* reports of questions asked in the House of Lords and House of Commons by Lord Rosebery and Mr. Bryce, on the 1st and 9th instant, respecting the long-pending negotiations with France on the New Hebrides question.

Lord Salisbury continues to think that no exception can be taken to the language held by the Government of the Republic, which he describes as being entirely correct. All the same, the French troops are not taken away, and the Foreign Office has still to content itself with the hope that the French Minister's professions will one day be "translated into practice." The Government of the Republic, in the meanwhile, quietly maintains the attitude it took up long ago, as you are well aware, that the New Hebrides question will be settled when the Egyptian one is. Lord Salisbury now announces, for the first time in Parliament, that there is no objection to the two questions being taken together; only he demurs to the New Hebrides having to wait for the other. But, having regard to what has just passed about the Egyptian Convention, no one is likely to be surprised if, for some time to come, communications from the French Government relating to the New Hebrides should continue to be of the same "inconclusive character" as Lord Salisbury describes.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 30th July, 1887.]

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Mr. BRYCE asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs when he expected to be able to give an account of the progress of the negotiations with France relating to the evacuation of the New Hebrides.

Sir J. FERGUSSON.—I hope to lay upon the table papers showing the course of these negotiations. The negotiations as to the New Hebrides have been associated with others which had been commenced in the time of previous Governments; but Her Majesty's Government have pressed for nothing else from the French Government except a fulfilment of the formal obligations of the French Government with respect to the New Hebrides. Her Majesty's Government are well aware that these questions have been too long at issue; they have spared no efforts to bring them to a conclusion by friendly representations, and they cannot but deeply regret the unsettled position in which they still remain.

Mr. BRYCE asked when the papers would be laid on the table, and also whether it was the intention of the Government that any agreement finally made should be confined to the settlement of the New Hebrides question, or whether the evacuation by France of the New Hebrides would involve the concession of something else on our part.

Sir J. FERGUSSON hoped the papers would be presented in a few days. The settlement of the New Hebrides question, which he trusted would not be much longer delayed, would stand on its own merits; but he did not mean to convey that there would not be a settlement of other matters, because there were other matters which the Government were exceedingly anxious to see settled.

[Extract from the *Times*, Tuesday, 2nd August, 1887.]

HOUSE OF LORDS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

The Earl of ROSEBERY.—I also desire to put a question to the noble Marquis on a point upon which I need not dwell, because it has been so constantly before your Lordships. I cannot disguise from the noble Marquis that there exists a feeling of great apprehension with regard to the continued presence of the French in the New Hebrides. A statement from the noble Marquis might greatly alleviate that feeling.

The Marquis of SALISBURY.—I entirely share the feelings of the noble Earl. I look upon this continued occupation with deep regret, though I am not able to say that the French Government hold any language on the subject to which we can take exception. Our representatives have fully called the attention of the French Government to the gravity with which this matter is regarded both in this country and also in the colonies. (Hear, hear.) I can only repeat the hope that before long the expressed opinions of the French Government, which are entirely correct, may be translated into practice. (Hear, hear.) It is fair to the French Government that I should say that they have

wished to take side by side with this matter the negotiations in regard to the Suez Canal which were some time ago in progress. We have no objection to this, but we must demur to these latter negotiations being the cause of any delay in regard to the former.

The Earl of ROSEBURY.—Has any communication been received from the French Government since May last, when the noble Marquis informed us that he expected to receive one?

The Marquis of SALISBURY.—Yes, one communication of a very inconclusive character.

[Extracts from the *Times*, Wednesday, 10th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES QUESTION.

Paris, 9th August.

THE journal *Paris* this evening states that the British Chargé d'Affaires yesterday requested M. Flourens, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to name a date for the French evacuation of the New Hebrides.

M. Flourens replied that he could not give a precise answer so long as England did not make known her intentions regarding Egypt and the neutralisation of the Suez Canal.

M. Flourens leaves Paris this evening for a three weeks' stay at La Bourboule.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

MR. BRYCE asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, in the negotiations now proceeding for the evacuation by France of the New Hebrides, the French Government had endeavoured to associate that question with questions relating to the Suez Canal and to the future of Egypt; whether Her Majesty's Government would continue to press for an immediate and separate solution of the New Hebrides questions, and would insist on the view that the former question should be forthwith disposed of, without waiting for the settlement of the more debatable matters which related to the Suez Canal and Egypt; whether any habitual criminals had lately been sent from France to any of the French colonies in the Pacific; and whether it was the fact that settlers from France continued to establish themselves in the New Hebrides.

SIR J. FERGUSON.—The French Government have desired that the negotiations in regard to the New Hebrides and the Suez Canal should proceed *pari passu*, but have not sought to associate the former with questions relating to Egypt generally. Her Majesty's Government, while not objecting to discuss the two subjects at the same time, have in no way consented that the withdrawal of the French troops from the New Hebrides should be postponed until an agreement had been arrived at for the neutralisation of the Suez Canal. Her Majesty's Government are pressing upon the French Government that the negotiations should be brought to a close in respect to this subject, upon which the two Governments are perfectly agreed in principle. No shipment of habitual criminals to New Caledonia has lately been reported. The last of which we have any knowledge took place in November last. It is the fact that settlers continue to be sent from France to the New Hebrides.

MR. BRYCE said that he would call attention to that subject on the Diplomatic Vote.

No. 5.

THE AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 26th August, 1887.

Since my letter of the 10th instant, No. 1209, the New Hebrides question has been again No. 4. before both Houses of the Imperial Parliament.

Lord Rosebery had given notice to call attention to it in the House of Lords on the 11th instant; but Lord Salisbury said that serious public inconvenience would result from discussing it at all, and Lord Rosebery withdrew his notice.

On the 22nd Mr. Labouchere asked in the House of Commons what steps had been taken with regard to the French colonists sent out to the islands since the French occupation; to which Sir James Fergusson (Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) simply replied that there was nothing in the agreement between the British and French Governments providing that the subjects of neither Power should settle in the group.

On the 23rd, the Diplomatic Vote being under consideration, Mr. Bryce (Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Mr. Gladstone's Government) called attention to the continued French occupation, and gave a brief history of the successive events that had taken place, but concluded with the usual assurance that he did not wish to interfere with any negotiations that were going on. Sir James Fergusson replied, defending the course pursued by the Government; and pointed out that other countries, having a sense of power and desire for expansion, were anxious to occupy the unsettled lands of the world, and that due consideration must be given to such feelings; adding that the subject of the colonisation of the New Hebrides had formed no part of the agreement [of 1878-82] between England and France, and that Her Majesty's Government would be going absolutely beyond their rights if they objected to it. With regard to what Mr. Bryce had said against the Egyptian and New Hebrides questions being mixed up together, Sir James Fergusson repeated what Lord Salisbury had said in the House of Lords, to the effect that Her Majesty's Government had not objected to discuss the two questions at the same time, but had always refused to admit there was any connection between them.

Mr. John Higginson, the chief promoter of the French companies now at work in the islands, has written a long letter to Sir Charles Dilke, stating the case from the French point of view.

I annex a number of extracts from newspapers, and reports of what passed in the Houses. One of these, you will see, contains a report which came to a Paris newspaper to the effect that the English and French Governments had "come to an understanding over the New Hebrides"

question;" but there is nothing in it, and no change in the situation. M. Flourens, indeed, dropped such a thin mask as there once was. When the British Chargé d'Affaires asked him to name a date for the evacuation of the islands, he practically said that the French would only name a date for going out of the New Hebrides when England named a date for going out of Egypt.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 13th August, 1887.]

HOUSE OF LORDS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

The Marquis of SALISBURY.—I observe that the noble Earl opposite (Lord Rosebery) has put down on the Paper for next week a notice which will involve discussion as to the New Hebrides. I do not wish to contest the parliamentary right of the noble Lord to bring that question forward—in fact, under some circumstances it might be his duty to do so—but, perhaps, without going further into details, I should say that I think that serious public inconvenience would result from a discussion on this question at this time. I would, therefore, endeavour to persuade the noble Earl to withdraw his notice.

The Earl of ROSEBERY.—I have not the slightest hesitation whatever in replying at once to the appeal of the noble Marquis. Any one who sees the notice I have put upon the Paper will easily perceive that it is by no means my intention to embarrass Her Majesty's Government. If I took the view of the noble Lord the President of the Council as to our numerical powers, it would be impossible under any circumstances to embarrass Her Majesty's Government; but, without entering into that, I may at once say that my one and only object in putting that notice on the Paper was to strengthen the hands of Her Majesty's Government in dealing with what is a grave difficulty indeed. If I had brought it on I should simply have recapitulated circumstances already well known to your Lordships, the arrangement with regard to the New Hebrides having been entered into some time ago, and pledges constantly conveyed to the late Government by the French Government. But there is no use in doing that if in any way it would injure the progress of negotiations. I am delighted to hear it stated that those negotiations have arrived at such a stage as to render discussion undesirable. I do not know whether before we disperse for the holidays the noble Marquis may be able to make any official statement on the matter, but I do hope that when we assemble next year we shall know that an occupation has come to an end which has ceased, in my opinion, to have any justification at all.

[Extract from the *Post*, Tuesday, 16th August, 1887.]

Not long since we pointed out in these columns the anxiety felt by the Australasian Colonies in the matter of the continued presence of French troops in the New Hebrides, and to some extent anticipated the question put by Lord Rosebery to the Marquis of Salisbury in the House of Lords a fortnight ago. The reply of the Prime Minister on that occasion to the late Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Mr. Gladstone's Government, if it did not altogether embody the subject-matter of the article in question, at any rate agreed with the salient points therein expressed. Not only did Lord Salisbury sympathize with Lord Rosebery in his inability to disguise the fact that "there existed a feeling of great apprehension with regard to the continued presence of the French on these islands," but the Prime Minister looked upon "this continued occupancy with regret," although unable to say that the French Government held "any language on the subject" to which we might take exception. Our diplomatic representatives have fully called the attention of the French Cabinet to the gravity with which the matter is regarded, both in this country and the colonies, and Lord Salisbury has reason to hope that "before long the expressed opinions of the French Government, which are entirely correct, may be translated into practice." We share with the Prime Minister his evident desire to alleviate public feeling on a subject which so deeply concerns Her Majesty's Australasian Colonies, and are relieved to find from the result of the suggestion made to Lord Rosebery in the House of Lords on Friday night that there is at last some prospect of an approaching settlement. At the same time we must demur to any negotiations which may be in progress between this country and France relative to matters connected with the management or neutralisation of the Suez Canal being made the cause of any delay in arriving at a satisfactory conclusion in respect to the New Hebrides difficulty. The French Government have, Lord Salisbury tells us, expressed a wish to treat the two questions "side by side," a wish to which Her Majesty's Government offer "no objection." Here we are reluctantly compelled, from the information before us, to express a contrary opinion to that given by Her Majesty's Advisers. There exists a very signal objection to the negotiations in regard to the Suez Canal being taken "side by side" with the negotiations relating to the withdrawal of French troops from the New Hebrides, as, even if the one is not allowed to interfere with the other, the probability of delay creeps in, and were we to acquiesce in this expression of feeling on the part of the French Government we should at the same time be giving our opponents the opportunity of playing another card of the same colour which since the beginning of the game has proved so successful a suit so far as they are concerned.

We cannot forget the result of dragging the negotiations concerning the settlement of the Newfoundland fisheries dispute into the diplomatic dealings that in 1882 took place between this country and France relative to the action of the French Government in the matter of hoisting the tricolour in the Island of Raiatea. The two questions, although having nothing whatever to do with one another, were taken "side by side," and delay after delay occurred, until at last public attention waned in respect to the latter unconstitutional act, and the French were allowed to remain in possession of an island which, in 1847, by a treaty entered into between Lord Palmerston and

Comte de Jarnac, the two Governments had reciprocally engaged "never to take possession of in any form whatever." The proceeding of the French authorities of Tahiti was discussed by the French Government, but it was admitted by the then Foreign Secretary that France had seized the opportunity to open negotiations for the abrogation of the 1847 Treaty in consideration of adequate concessions on our part "in connection with other pending questions." It would seem, therefore, that an attempt is now being made on the part of France to adopt similar tactics in regard to the New Hebrides to those employed with so much success by that country in the matter of Raiatea, and, although the result in the two cases can scarcely be the same, we demur to any proceedings that would give rise to a possibility of increased delay in the withdrawal of the French troops from the New Hebrides. Let us for a moment glance at the two questions which France would wish to take "side by side." First we will take the position of affairs in the New Hebrides. Briefly it is this: In order to protect the uninvestigated rights of a French trading company, the French Government sanctioned the landing of troops in these islands, the independence of which, in 1878, France and England reciprocally agreed to respect; an engagement that was renewed by Comte d'Aunay, the French Chargé d'Affaires, on the part of France, by the *note verbale* of the 9th of July, 1883, and publicly referred to the following night by Lord Granville in the House of Lords.

More than a year has passed since the French troops took up their quarters in these islands, and, in spite of remonstrances from Her Majesty's Government, no action on the part of the French Government has yet taken place with regard to their withdrawal. There they still remain, in spite of diplomatic negotiations and in face of the 1878 understanding. At length a definite reply is given by France to this country, to the effect that when the negotiations with regard to the Suez Canal are settled, then the withdrawal of the troops from the New Hebrides will be considered. Now, what are these negotiations? Firstly, there is the question of widening the canal. This, however, has been decided upon, so negotiations in that respect are already at an end. Secondly, we have the subject of neutralisation, but this is hardly a matter that concerns France and England alone. The nations have a voice in the settlement of the passage of war-ships at all times through this highway to the East, and their wishes can hardly be regulated by the negotiations between France and this country. The neutralisation question may therefore be dismissed as not having any serious bearing on the withdrawal of the French troops from the New Hebrides. Lastly, there are many little matters "in regard to the Suez Canal" which are in dispute between the French and English representatives on the Board of Directors, and will take some time to arrange, seeing it would be absurd to suppose that the French troops are to be allowed to remain in possession of independent islands until every detail in connection with the rival claims of the two countries in respect of the Canal management is amicably arranged. From the comparison of the two problems before us we fail to see that the solution of the one will in any way facilitate the solution of the other; and we would urge upon Her Majesty's Government the necessity of avoiding, as far as possible, any acquiescence in the wish of France to take the two matters "side by side."

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 20th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 19th August.

MR. JOHN HIGGINSON, of New Caledonia, who, I believe, is American by birth and French by naturalisation, publishes in the *Temps* a long letter on the New Hebrides. He argues that, although in 1853 the French Government neglected to hoist its flag on the islands, it regarded them as a dependency of New Caledonia, and styled the first Governor of the latter "Gouverneur de la Nouvelle Calédonie et Dépendances." Dismissing as inexplicable the Anglo-French Convention of 1878, he maintains that since 1882 the English has been almost absorbed by the French element, 700,000 acres of land having been formally transferred from English to French colonists, while nearly a million acres have been purchased from the native chiefs. He justifies the landing of French troops, by which the Europeans were saved from massacre and cannibalism, unbroken tranquillity being maintained for twelve months. He charges the English missionaries with inculcating hatred of Frenchmen, and with keeping up a fictitious agitation in Australia against French annexation.

Mr. Higginson hints that France might allay Australian uneasiness by promising not to make the islands a penal settlement; and after urging the danger of a dual rule, and the difficulty of a division of territory, he advocates that England should assume a protectorate over the Banks and Santa Cruz, while France should annex the New Hebrides, and engage to put a stop to the system of transportation to the South Seas.

[Extract from the *Times*, Tuesday, 23rd August, 1887.]

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

MR. LABOUCHERE asked what action Her Majesty's Government had taken with regard to the French colonists that had been sent out to the New Hebrides since the French troops had been in occupation.

SIR J. FERGUSSON.—There is nothing in the agreement between the British and French Governments that the subjects of neither Power shall settle in the New Hebrides.

[Extract from the *Times*, Wednesday, 24th August, 1887.]

The Committee then resumed the consideration of the Diplomatic Vote (£234,524 for Her Majesty's Embassies and Missions abroad), which was begun on Saturday.

MR. BRYCE regretted that on Saturday the Government had not given the House a little more information as to the course which it was intended to pursue in the next six months. . . .

As to the occupation by France of the New Hebrides, he understood that the Government did not wish to give any information as to the negotiations. He felt bound, however, to direct attention to the subject. The Australian Colonies were sensitively interested in the New Hebrides question. It was discussed at the recent Colonial Conference, and the discussion was of so vivacious a character that Her Majesty's Government had not printed it in the report. The Australian colonists trusted the House of Commons to see that their interests were properly safeguarded; and we were bound to put them in the position they would be in if they had representatives in this House. (Hear, hear.) It was only in this way we could reciprocate the cordial attachment of the colonists to this country. In regard to the New Hebrides the simple statement of the facts was better than any comment. In 1878 the French Government, alarmed by articles in the Australian newspapers advocating the annexation of the New Hebrides by us, asked us to join in a declaration that both countries would respect the independence of the New Hebrides, and that neither would seek to occupy them or to establish a protectorate over them. That was agreed to, and the Australian Colonies were informed that both countries had adopted a policy of non-occupation. The agreement was renewed in 1883 by a *note verbale*. In January, 1886, the French Government asked whether we would waive the agreement if they would undertake to send no more convicts to New Caledonia. We sent the proposal to the colonies, where it was strongly objected to. Next we received angry protests from Australia that a French expedition had started for the New Hebrides, carrying in ships of war troops and materials for the erection of barracks. We despatched a vessel of war to see fair-play done. The French Government admitted that they were bound by the agreement, and promised to withdraw their troops, but they claimed a right to protect French settlers. We proposed a scheme of joint naval protection; the French Government sent us a counter-proposal; we replied on the 26th November last; and since then, as he understood, there had been no further reply on the part of France. But in September last a fresh batch of convicts was sent to New Caledonia, and every fresh batch increased the alarm and anxiety of our colonists. It had been stated in that House, in reply to a question, that there was no agreement between us and France bearing upon colonisation; and that was quite true. The settlement of French colonists was nothing in itself; but each settlement was taken to mean a further step towards annexation. In this state of facts the French Government continued to evade the demands of Her Majesty's Government for an immediate settlement of the question. It was understood that the French Government were endeavouring to mix up the question of the evacuation of the New Hebrides with the questions of the Suez Canal and of Egypt; but he hoped suggestions of that kind would be resisted by the Government. He quite admitted that Her Majesty's Government had not treated the two matters as one; but, unless much care was taken to show that in their view the two matters were entirely distinct, there was a serious danger that we might be drawn into a sort of bargain. (Hear.) That was a thing this country ought to resist. (Hear.) It was impossible to imagine a clearer diplomatic case than that which we possessed—it was a case which there was no occasion to mix up with any other diplomatic dispute in any other part of the world; it ought to be dealt with on its own merits. There was a rumour, he trusted unfounded, that Her Majesty's Government had thought of making some concession to France in some other part of the Pacific in return for France quitting the New Hebrides. That would be looked upon with great disapproval by this country, and he hoped that the right honourable gentleman would be able to show that no such bargain was in the contemplation of Her Majesty's Government. If there was, he thought that it would be their duty to ask the House and the country to express their disapproval of it. He did not wish to interfere with any current negotiations in what he had said, but we were under a serious liability of duty to our Australian Colonies in this matter. He hoped that Her Majesty's Government would be able to give a satisfactory assurance, and satisfy the colonies with the news that the New Hebrides would be soon evacuated by France.

Sir J. FERGUSSON said that in his reply to the honourable member on Saturday he might have given an inadequate answer upon some points; but the Government had had some hopes of passing the vote on which they were engaged, and he had not felt justified in speaking at greater length. . . . With regard to the observations of the honourable member as to the New Hebrides, he had no complaint to make. He thought that the question was one which must necessarily attract very much attention in this country, and, beyond that, the degree of anxious attention which it attracted from the Australian Colonies must render it a topic to which attention must be called. That was quite evident. The right honourable gentleman had referred to the discussion which was said to have taken place at the Colonial Conference. For reasons which he need not go into, those deliberations had not been published; but he must say that the rumours which had got afloat on that subject had been extremely exaggerated. He thought it was of very great advantage that those intelligent and eminent men did not hesitate to express themselves frankly to Her Majesty's Government as to the feeling of the colonies which they represented; and, if Her Majesty's Government had been at all insensible on the matter, they would have been impressed by the manner in which it had been brought to their attention by those gentlemen. He had himself passed six or seven years in those colonies, and he thoroughly understood and appreciated the feelings of the colonists upon the subject. But at the same time we must have regard to the feelings of other countries in such matters. (Hear, hear.) It must be evident that other countries, having a sense of power and a desire of expansion, were anxious to occupy the unsettled lands of the world, and we ought to have consideration for their feelings in that respect. With regard to the New Hebrides, it was quite true that certain engagements had been entered into between Great Britain and France as to an occupation. But the French Government held that the French settlements there required the temporary protection of a military force. Her Majesty's Government could not look without fear and doubt upon the continued occupation by a military force of a group which it had been agreed should be neutral, and therefore successive Administrations had urged upon the French Government the necessity of each nation fulfilling its pledge to

the other, and the French Government had never denied the weight of their obligations. In the course of the last year some negotiations took place with a view to the protection of the settlements, for as colonisation went on there must be some protection for the colonists of either nation. It was no wonder, however, that the Australian colonists saw with concern the continued presence of a military force in the New Hebrides, and Her Majesty's Government had not hesitated to represent to the French Government that the continued presence of such a force had given uneasiness to the Australian Colonies and to the people of this country. (Hear, hear.) His honourable friend had said that he had shown a judicious and official reserve in not giving more information to the House. But his honourable friend knew well that when communications were going on between two countries it was impossible to give details or to place the correspondence in detailed form before the House. He was sure, therefore, his honourable friend could not complain seriously that the Government had not laid the correspondence on the table. This, however, he could say: that there was not any connection admitted between the questions of the New Hebrides and the neutralisation of the Suez Canal. He had admitted to the House that Her Majesty's Government had not objected to discuss the two questions at the same time; and he would ask the Committee, if there were two questions, each of which was of great importance to the country, was it necessary that the discussion of one of them should be delayed until the other was settled? It might be that the French Government, attaching great importance to the Suez Canal question, desired to press it forward rapidly; but, as he had said, Her Majesty's Government could not admit that there was any connection between the two questions. The subject of the colonisation of the New Hebrides formed no part of the agreement between the two countries, and we should be going absolutely beyond our rights if we objected to it. The question was, how the settlers were to be protected. He was sure the Committee would agree that it was most desirable that a good understanding should continue to subsist between two neighbouring countries like France and England, and that a friendly rivalry should not be allowed to degenerate into animosity. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. LABOUCHERE observed that he saw no more reason for our interfering in Asia Minor than in China or Japan. If we availed ourselves of our rights under the Treaty of Cyprus, Turkey would ask of us the *quid pro quo*—viz., the defence of Asia Minor against Russia or any other Power that threatened it. He thought that the position of the French with regard to the New Hebrides was very similar to our position in Egypt; and, before we could expect France to fulfil her pledges in regard to the New Hebrides, we should fulfil our pledges in regard to Egypt. Considering the strong feeling that existed in Australia on the subject, he hoped that every diplomatic endeavour would be made to induce the French to withdraw from the New Hebrides. (Hear, hear.)

* * * * *

[Extract from the *Times*.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 23rd August.

THE *République Française* to-day, in an article on the New Hebrides question, says,—

“An agreement on the subject could easily be arrived at if England were willing to put a stop to the absurd calumnies and rodomontades of the Australians. England, who divided New Guinea with Germany, cannot oppose the French annexation of the New Hebrides, but can demand guarantees from France, notably an undertaking not to transport thither either *récidivistes* or convicts. By the exercise of good-will this question will lose the irritating character which it should never have assumed.”

[Extract from the *Chronicle*.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES QUESTION.

(From our Correspondent.)

Paris, Tuesday night.

ALTHOUGH the New Hebrides question has not fallen into the domain of popular controversy in France, it has provoked a good deal of bitterness in official circles. This is well reflected to-day in a long article in the *République Française*. According to the writer, England in Egypt is anxious to allow things to drag, whilst Sir James Fergusson himself declares that quite a different policy must be followed in the distant archipelago. The writer then retraces the history of the New Hebrides group. When France, in 1853, took possession of the Canaque Islands, it was understood that the whole cluster of islands should pass into her hands. There was, of course, no formal declaration, the result being that English and French colonists rapidly settled in the islands. In 1878 France reiterated her desire that the isles should be open and independent; but this, of course, was neither a binding nor a permanent treaty. From this moment English action in the New Hebrides increased, by the influx of new colonists, who were warned by the Governor of the Fiji Islands to register their belongings according to the requirements of English law. Colonisation naturally increased, and in 1882, as far as private property is concerned, the English colonists had the best of it.

This state of things has, however, been changed by the founding at Noumea of a French land company, of which Mr. Higginson is the life and soul. Out of the 12,000 square kilometres, no less than 7,000 have been bought up, the vendors being in most instances the English settlers. The French element is now in the ascendant. To protect these against the attacks of natives and cannibals, France has thought fit to land some troops. Evidently there is no international wrong here, and probably England would let the matter pass if she were not spurred on by Australia. England will, according to the *République Française*, do well to remember that it is highly inopportune to allow colonies to enter into grave international questions in which the eventual responsibility must fall upon the Mother-country. A wise man who keeps dogs must not allow them to bark at the passers-by.

Notwithstanding all this, the conclusion of the article is eminently pacific. M. T. Colani, the writer, is evidently no believer in the rodomontade of which *La France* is now the chief standard-bearer. He is hard upon the Presbyterian missionaries, who hate Popish France. He looks upon the remonstrances from Australia as presumptuous and unfounded. He thinks that, as we have halved New Guinea with Germany, we are out of court when we talk of the annexation of the New Hebrides by France. Still, he thinks that England is entitled to guarantees that the convict element shall be eliminated, in deference to her Australian subjects. A little good-will on both sides will speedily settle a question of miniature diplomacy which ought never to have had any element of bitterness about it.

[Extract from the *Advertiser*.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

THE *République Française* has been treating its readers to a review of the condition of affairs in the New Hebrides. The writer is positively charming in his *naïveté*. He really cannot see why so much fuss is being made over the prolonged French occupation of those delectable regions. "England and France," he says, "could easily come to an agreement on the subject if England would only put a stop to the absurd calumnies and rodomontades of the Australians." "Of course," he coolly goes on to say, "England cannot oppose the French annexation of the New Hebrides, but she can demand guarantees from France, notably an undertaking not to use the islands as a convict settlement." England most unquestionably can, and we sincerely hope she will, oppose most energetically and effectually the annexation of the islands by the French. Such annexation would be a distinct violation of the existing treaty between the two countries, and the duty of our Government to resist it was strongly urged in the discussion which arose upon the diplomatic vote in Committee of Supply last night. The reasons why England must never permit France to follow her usual line of conduct in such cases are important and various. Regard for our own prestige in the eyes of Europe will not allow us to submit to so direct a humiliation. The eyes of the Australians are also fixed upon England to see whether she is going to support them or not. And if she does not, but "caves in" ignominiously to French bounce and bluster, her prestige with the colonies and the affection they bear her, which has been so strikingly manifest of late, will alike be grievously diminished. Lastly, the energetic protests of the Australians themselves, who know their own business at least as well as we do, ought to preclude the bare possibility of the British Government giving way to the coolly-impudent request that we will disregard the interests of our own colonies to study the convenience of France. It is an unfortunate fact that, diplomatic assurances notwithstanding, there has never been any real doubt, or there should not have been, as to the intentions of France. It is now very many months indeed since those intentions first became discernible, and still the French are in the New Hebrides. Moreover, they have completely changed their tone. Then they protested that annexation was out of the question; now they practically ask us unofficially to accept the *fait accompli*, and some time ago they officially proposed to the English Foreign Office to discuss the matter side by side with the Egyptian question. In other words, there they are, and there they mean to stay; but they will be much obliged to us if we will afford them some decent diplomatic excuse for doing so. We trust Lord Salisbury will be equal to the occasion, and will insist upon the specific compliance with the terms of the existing agreement, by which France and England both bound themselves to keep clear of the New Hebrides.

[Extracts from the *Times*, Thursday, 25th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 24th August.

THE *Soleil* to-day refers at some length to the New Hebrides question, and expresses the opinion that it would be easy to arrive at an understanding with England on the subject. The journal says,—

"It will be sufficient to seek some compensation with which England would declare herself satisfied. Since her opposition can have no other real motive than a desire for such compensation, and as the British Government possibly already knows what demands it will put forward, the discussion between the two Governments could be quickly finished, and the sooner the better."

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

SIR,—

To the Editor of the *Times*.

According to a telegram published in your issue of this morning, the *République Française* believes that the New Hebrides question could be settled with ease "if England were willing to put a stop to the absurd calumnies and rodomontades of the Australians." Now, I am familiar with all the colonial protests by speech and pen against French annexation, and I am certainly not aware that the Australians have been indulging in either calumny or meaningless rant in discussing this most vital of questions to the future of their country. Their policy throughout has been one of simple self-defence. They have a well-grounded fear that if the French obtain possession of the New Hebrides the group will, notwithstanding present professions to the contrary, eventually become a second New Caledonia in the Pacific. They want to prevent, and they are determined to prevent, the establishment of another penal settlement, or "moral cesspool," as they more forcibly characterize the institution, in Australian waters. As for France giving "an undertaking not to transport either *récidivistes* or convicts to the New Hebrides," what would such an undertaking be worth in view of the present undisguised French military occupation of the islands in open defiance of treaty obligations? The *République Française* holds that "England, who divided New Guinea with Germany, cannot oppose the French annexation of the New Hebrides;" but this very plausible contention ignores the ferment that was created throughout Australasia by Lord Derby's pusillani-

mous surrender on the New Guinea question. Mr. J. A. Froude was in Melbourne when the exasperation was at its height, and in the pages of "Oceana" he has placed on record his deep sense of the dangerously-excited state of Australian feeling at the time. He would be a bold Minister who would resolve on repeating Lord Derby's risky experiment, for, in doing so, he would be plainly precipitating a crisis between the colonies and the Mother-country. The fact is—and the sooner it is practically recognised the better—that the Australians are the people whose interests and sentiments must be considered first and foremost in the settlement of this question, for it is they, and they alone, who are directly affected by the ultimate disposal of the New Hebrides, and who will have to suffer all the painful consequences should an irretrievable mistake be made by the Colonial Office in London. If only both England and France could acquire some adequate appreciation of the strength of Australian native sentiment with respect to foreign aggression in the Pacific, all these needlessly protracted diplomatic negotiations would speedily terminate, and both countries would see the propriety of rigidly respecting the provisions of the existing treaty and regarding the New Hebrides for the future as neutral territory.

I am, &c.,

24th August.

J. F. HOGAN (of Melbourne, Australia).

[Extract from the *Standard*, Friday, 26th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

(From our Correspondent.)

Paris, Thursday night.

THE *Pays* claims to have received advices from London mentioning the report that the English and French Governments have come to an understanding over the New Hebrides question, and that as soon as M. Waddington returns from attending the General Council of the Aisne an exchange of signatures will take place. This journal adds,—

"Among the numerous suggestions examined, the French Government chose a sort of condominium, perhaps contrary to our wishes. The naval divisions of the two countries stationed in the Pacific will therefore be charged with the police of the Archipelago. How they will carry out the task no one can say; but we may anticipate a continual source of conflict from the arrangement. It goes without saying that the marine infantry we landed for the protection of our countrymen at Port Sandwich and Port Habannah will evacuate these ports, which by right are French ground; and our flag, which was hoisted there, will be hauled down in obedience to the yelping of the Australian Colonies."

[Extract from the *St. James's Gazette*, Thursday, 25th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES AND NICKEL.

A CORRESPONDENT, who has access to exceedingly good information on the subject with which he deals, sends us the following remarks:—

If we remember that the new French colonial policy, which has been industriously pursued since 1880, if political in its origin, has been largely financial and commercial in its subsequent development, and if we also recollect that the New Hebrides contain valuable mines of nickel, we need be the less astonished at the pertinacity with which the French pursue their claims to the islands. In the light of these considerations, and of M. Flourens's recent audacious despatch, in which Egypt and the New Hebrides were skilfully and cynically treated together, it is quite worth our while to bestow a little attention upon the long and exhaustive letter published in the *Temps* the other day by M. John Higginson, and addressed to, of all people in the world, Sir Charles Dilke. The letter shows that the meaning of "Les Nouvelles Hébrides" is Nickel—as the meaning of Egypt is Suez and the Nile; and M. Higginson, a naturalised Frenchman born a Scot, is Lesseps and Taillandier and *Le Bosphore Egyptien* rolled into one! M. Higginson represents Nickel, since he has, or had till recently, the chief interest in the mines in the New Hebrides.

M. Flourens was quite justified in connecting the Egyptian and Hebridean questions as he did; for, in the first place, it gave him the occasion of exercising his playfully ironical wit upon an English Cabinet in a manner rarely attempted before, and in the next it established a basis of negotiation between the two Foreign Offices in London and Paris that must have much pleased the Russians, whose Envoy so warmly protected his French colleague at Constantinople. M. Flourens is a very able man—the only approach to a diplomatist that the French Republic has had to show; but his despatch would have been a great imprudence if England had not previously proved how much she could bear. M. Flourens's bantering having been submitted to, M. Higginson, after waiting to see what would happen, comes down upon the public with several columns of close print, in which he proclaims authoritatively the doctrine of the French presence in the New Hebrides. When I say authoritatively, I do not speak too strongly; for those who ought to know affirm that this important document was revised by M. Flourens himself. The article itself is a declaration of right—a reversal of all the pretences put forth by the French Government for more than four years and accepted by us as genuine. It copies the language used by Government organs since M. Flourens came into office, and the expressions invariably employed as to the "rights" of France in Egypt, and distinctly asserts the rule of France in the New Hebrides, not only as a matter of fact but as a matter of law deriving directly and indisputably from the occupation of New Caledonia. Because New Caledonia is French, therefore is the Hebridean territory French also: such is the new doctrine. At the end of his *plaidoirie* M. Higginson offers a plan of "arrangement" to the English Government (and Australian people) very much in the tone that the German Chancellor might adopt if he were suggesting to France some possible compensation for Alsace-Lorraine!

Meanwhile, just on the eve of the prorogation of Parliament, M. Rouvier, as President of the Council, obtains the agreement of the Cabinet to the adoption of nickel as the substitute for copper

in the coins of small value, and the drawing-up of a Bill to ratify the same, which will be voted by the Chamber on its meeting. This will put several millions into the pockets of M. Higginson and his co-directors, and will certainly not be prejudicial to those who, in an official capacity, have supported him.

The coincidence of the nickel coinage and the evacuation of Egypt by the English in M. Flourens's witty despatch is easy to explain. In the French governmental mind one is as important as the other, and one may be used to bear upon the other; but the powers in Downing Street would do well to look into this *question connexe*, as they call it in Paris. It is not, to use Campbell's words, with "Nelson and the Nile" that we have to do; but it is a question of "Nickel and the Nile" with Messrs. Rouvier, Flourens, Higginson, *et Cie.*, in the matter of the New Hebrides.

No. 6.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London. S.W., 16th September, 1887.

Nothing further of a definite kind has happened about the New Hebrides. At the end of August, a Press telegram came from Melbourne that the French were trespassing on the Mission lands, and protests thereon from the Government of Victoria were duly made to the Colonial Office by Sir Graham Berry. The French Press keeps repeating that France will give no satisfaction to England about the islands until England accedes to her demands about the Suez Canal. The differences on that question are said to be getting nearer to a settlement, and some of the French journals are consequently preparing their readers for an early evacuation. The *Journal des Débats* a few days ago said, "There is a mutual engagement between the two countries not to annex the New Hebrides, and France has never thought of contesting or denying that engagement; but, as the Australian Colonies attach so much importance to our evacuating the islands, we can without much inconvenience withdraw our troops, so long as precautions are taken that our departure shall not be the signal for a massacre of our people." At the same time, I would recommend you not to rely much, for the present, on assurances such as you will find in the accompanying extracts, to the effect that the differences between England and France on Egyptian questions are being settled. The concurrence of the great Powers is necessary for any settlement, and this does not seem to be much nearer than it has been for a long time.

In the meanwhile, the French Government have ordered the Governor of New Caledonia to report upon the present relations between the natives and the colonists, and the measures to be taken for the safety of the latter. It remains to be seen whether any "colonists" are left. The *Times* lately published a letter from its correspondent at Noumea, saying that out of all the free immigrants brought out by the French New Hebrides Company only eight remained, the rest having either died of fever or drifted back to starve in the penal settlement.

Nevertheless, Mr. Higginson told me the other day that his company were buying up every land-claim they could in the group. Presently the same thing will happen there as at Samoa, where the acreage claimed by the German, English, and American speculators far exceeds the whole area of the Navigators Group.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 27th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Melbourne, 26th August.

INTELLIGENCE has been received here that trespasses have been committed by the French New Hebrides Company against the Presbyterian Missions in those islands. This news has caused a fresh outburst of feeling here, and the Victorian Government has accordingly requested Sir Graham Berry, the Agent-General in London, to bring the matter before the Home Government, and to strongly urge them to see that Australian interests are maintained in the New Hebrides.

Paris, 26th August.

There is no foundation for the statement published in the journal *Le Pays* that an understanding had been arrived at between the British and French Governments with regard to the New Hebrides. Neither have any terms been recently proposed by the French Government. It is thought that the Australians have attached more importance to the question than is justifiable in the circumstances, but it is hoped that some arrangement may yet be come to which will be acceptable to all parties concerned.

[Extract from the *Times*, Monday, 5th September, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

SIR,—

To the Editor of the *Times*.

I presume the subjoined communication, received by me to-day, is intended as an answer to my statement of colonial opinion on the New Hebrides question in the *Times* of Thursday:—

"London, 27th August.

"SIR,—No sensible man will believe that the Australians are afraid of the invasion of French convicts from New Caledonia.

"If it were so they have a very simple remedy. Instead of annoying Her Majesty's Ministers and creating international difficulties the Australians should require passports and certificates of respectability from every person landing on their shores, and enact that every convict shall be flogged and sent back to the French settlement.

"Why should the French be blamed for imitating the English in their experiment, which has been so successful, and has been the origin of our rich colonies at the antipodes?"

"The plan of sending convicts to a colony, of granting them land and giving them the chance of reforming, at the same time of never allowing them to return to Europe, is certainly better and more moral than the English system of keeping the convicts at Home and turning them out into society again after a few years, more corrupt, destitute, and desperate.

"Are the Australians jealous of the French colony? Some foolish men are so perhaps, but every intelligent merchant will understand that the Australian ports cannot but gain by the intercourse with a young and rising colony.

"The real motive of the wild complaints of the Australians is simply this: They wish to keep away from the Pacific Islands all European nations because they want to preserve them for their own use as a vast field from which they recruit labourers. This is disguised slave trade, which should be prohibited by philanthropic England.

"There is no lack of industrious Chinese, but the Chinaman does not submit to the treatment which is inflicted on the poor, helpless, ignorant islander.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

"A. MAQUET."

Taking these allegations *seriatim*, permit me to say,—

1. There is a broad distinction between fear and annoyance. No man is afraid of a mosquito *per se*, but, for all that, a constant succession of mosquito attacks is calculated to cause considerable unpleasantness and to induce a heartfelt wish that these troublesome insects were thousands of miles away instead of being so inconveniently close at hand. The French convicts are the mosquitoes of the Pacific, and the Australian colonists are the people entitled to general sympathy in consequence of their proximity to the pests.

2. The remedy proposed is by no means so simple as the writer supposes. A glance at the map of Australia will show that the Colony of Queensland—the nearest of the colonies to the French penal settlements in the Pacific—presents a coast-line of 2,550 miles—a distance so enormous as to preclude the possibility of its being adequately guarded by a colonial police force. Nothing but an elaborate and expensive system of military patrolling would meet the requirements of the case. It is very easy to say, "Flog your captured French convict and send him back;" but you have to catch him first. The experience of the past proves pretty conclusively that for the one French criminal caught on landing in Queensland ten at the very least succeed in eluding the vigilance of the police and mix with the general population. Their true character only becomes known when they recommence a career of crime, are reconvicted, and reimprisoned in the colonies. They have been known to work their way southwards from Queensland to Sydney and Melbourne, and many of them have been caught in these cities with the implements of crime in their possession. On being convicted and sentenced by the colonial Courts they have almost invariably confessed that New Caledonia was their latest place of residence. Latterly we have not heard so frequently of the landing of French convicts on the Queensland coast; but it is not so long since telegrams from local correspondents notifying the capture of another boatload of escaped French felons were quite a familiar feature in the colonial newspapers. The incident was, in fact, of such frequent occurrence that the belief became widespread that these successive and successful escapes could not possibly have been effected without the direct or the indirect connivance of the New Caledonian authorities. It is to prevent a renewal of this intolerable state of things and to save their shores from any more of this foreign pollution that the Australian colonists are so determined not to allow the New Hebrides to fall into the hands of the French. As for the suggestion that the evil could be met by "the Australians requiring passports and certificates of respectability from every person landing on their shores," why should the inoffensive many be put to the trouble of procuring these documents, when all that is necessary is that France should either keep her worst malefactors at home, or else guard them securely in New Caledonia, and prevent their becoming a nuisance and a peril to the British colonies in the immediate vicinity?

3. This statement is untrue, but the fallacy it contains is very prevalent. A great many people fancy that there is a direct connection between the English penal settlements in Australia and the present wealth and prosperity of the colonies. Such is not the case. It was the discovery of gold in 1851 by free men and the consequent immense influx of free-born immigrants, principally from the British Islands, that made the Australian Colonies what they are to-day. Convict Australia was submerged and blotted out by that tidal wave of adventurous population.

4. History does not bear out this assertion, though as a theory it commends itself on humanitarian grounds. But in actual practice it has been but too frequently found that remote penal settlements degenerate into theatres of shocking vice and moral degradation. (See report of a Committee of the House of Commons on transportation, 1838, and a report on the same subject by a Committee of the House of Lords, 1847.) The best mode of dealing with criminals will probably be a debatable subject for all time; but this much is certain: that no nation is justified in so acting that neighbouring friendly States are compelled, for their own protection, to maintain a large contingent of that nation's criminals. The number of French felons who are now in Australian prisons, and who ought legally to be in New Caledonia, would constitute a very interesting and instructive return.

5. The idea of any section of Australians being jealous of a French colony in the Pacific is ludicrously absurd. As for the Australian ports gaining by intercourse with a new foreign community in Australian waters, that somewhat mercenary consideration, I am aware, has influenced some Sydney politicians and caused them to run counter to the almost universal Australian sentiment on

the New Hebrides question. But the great bulk of the people of New South Wales are in full sympathy with their brethren in the other colonies, and are firmly of opinion that in this instance a provincial gain would be equivalent to a great national loss.

6. The opposition of the Australians to the French annexation of the New Hebrides is far from being grounded on the low motive that is here described as the "real" one. That motive, in point of fact, does not operate in the least, and it is a purely gratuitous assumption on the writer's part. The sugar plantations of tropical Queensland are the only portions of Australian territory on which Pacific islanders have been employed; and is it reasonable to suppose that, for the sake of this small area, all the Australian Colonies would combine at this time of day to support a system of slavery in disguise? Such a statement carries its refutation on its face. No; all interested in this question may rest assured that Australians in general, and Australian natives in particular, strenuously oppose the French designs on the New Hebrides because they are supremely anxious to rid themselves of two great and pressing evils—French felony on their shores and foreign aggression in their waters.

I am, &c.,

30th August.

J. F. HOGAN (of Melbourne, Australia).

[Extract from the *Times*, Monday, 5th September, 1887.]

WHILE the international question relating to the New Hebrides remains unsettled, any information is welcome which throws light on the real nature of the French colonies in the neighbourhood of those islands. Such information is provided in the letter which a correspondent sends us from Noumea, in New Caledonia. It is not every one who has been to Noumea, and those who have made themselves fully acquainted with the state of the convict settlements there and in the neighbourhood are very few indeed. Our correspondent is one of these, and his account of the state of the islands, especially of the *Île des Pins*, will be read with interest in proportion to its novelty. That island itself, a volcanic rock with a small extent of land capable of cultivation, is to the south-east of the Island of New Caledonia, and is situated just within the Tropic of Capricorn. New Caledonia itself is 240 miles long, and is, in fact, of greater extent than any other Pacific island except, of course, New Zealand. It is singularly diversified in structure and landscape, with rocks and mountains, rivers and woods; it is healthy and, on the whole, fertile, and it possesses no inconsiderable mineral wealth. It is to this place that the French for the last thirty years have been sending a certain number of their convicts, and are now despatching the *récidivistes*, or persons convicted of repeated offences. The latter are at present chiefly quartered in the *Île des Pins*, where, after 1871, the greater number of the Commune prisoners were settled; and the system adopted for them will be much the same as that which was tried for the latter. The Communards, as our correspondent describes them, were established in conditions which, if they could have but banished ennui, were not disagreeable; and, for persons of their type, it would be difficult to suggest a better system. Away from the exciting atmosphere of Paris, many of the *déportés* of the Commune were harmless enough; workmen who had been carried away by agitators or dreamy enthusiasts, or clerks out of work who had rashly taken service under the rebel authority. The dangerous men, and the men who burnt Paris and killed the hostages, had been shot; those who were sent to Noumea were, with a few noteworthy exceptions, the rank and file of the insurrection. As our correspondent remarks, when they reached the *Île des Pins* they found an ideal Commune, though a very dull one. They lived in little villages, connected by roads made by the labour of the more energetic prisoners; and the majority, being under no compulsion, did absolutely nothing. A small Government allowance, supplemented by gifts from friends at home, kept them alive. In 1879 came the amnesty, and the *Île des Pins* knew them no more. They returned to France, some to starve, a few to prosper, and the many to creep back into some kind of employment in which their past was as far possible forgotten.

Very different from the almost idyllic life of these political *déportés* is that of the criminals transported to New Caledonia. These men are real criminals—"deep-dyed ruffians" for the most part—men of the same type as the occupants of Dartmoor and Portland, or as those inhabitants of Norfolk Island whose existence, according to a celebrated parliamentary report of fifty years ago, was such a scandal and a danger. According to our correspondent, these men have a fairly easy life, their work not being continuous, and the discipline not over-severe. They work at road-making and other occupations; they rest during the great heat of the day; and at night they sleep in batches of fifty in the prison-houses. They have the appearance and manner of convicts all the world over; demoralised, brutal, and despairing, they seem like men past reformation. Of course it is chiefly through their associating together that the better among them get contaminated. A luckless wretch who has yielded to the temptation of the moment and robbed his employer's cash-box is sent to herd with professional burglars, with murderers on whom a susceptible jury has had pity, and with men who have lived by forgery. The result is the inevitable one: the better nature becomes more or less assimilated to the worse. It seems impossible to do anything with the convicts when once the convict-taint has really affected them. They may "reform"—that is, they may conform to rules and conciliate their masters, and may thus obtain grants of land and become members of the *pénitenciers agricoles*. But the lives of men and women who have done this, and who have been married under the auspices of the officials, are rarely satisfactory, and the reputation of those *pénitenciers* is as bad as it could be. Yet it would not do, according to that universal French theory which forbids the abuses of the administration to be exposed, to let the French public know that the penal colonies are a failure. As our correspondent remarks, a Government who made such an announcement would be censured; and, in point of fact, even the attempts of the local superintendents to put a forcible stop to the abominations of Bourail, the chief convict settlement, have been repressed by the Governor as *trop de zèle*. There is a widespread idea in France, a mixture of patriotic optimism and of a misunderstanding of history, that the French penal colonies will in no long time develop into flourishing and reputable communities, like the British colonies which, in

their belief, have grown out of the convict settlements in Norfolk Island and Tasmania. The latter theory is a familiar blunder, which the colonists are always repelling with natural indignation; but it seems to have become inveterate in the French mind. A fresh example of it occurs this morning in the letter of M. Maquet, quoted by our correspondent, Mr. Hogan.

Meantime, the practical question of what is to be done in regard to the New Hebrides remains where it was. That it should do so is not to the credit of France, who in this matter has shown herself singularly wanting in respect for her own pledges. It is well known that, since 1878, England and France have been under a mutual engagement not to annex the New Hebrides; but for nearly two years the islands have been occupied by French troops. The reason given by the French Government is that outrages were committed upon French subjects in 1885. Speaking in the House of Lords last May, Lord Salisbury used the words: "They—the French Government—have assured us, in tones whose earnestness and sincerity we have no right to doubt, that they have no intention of permanently occupying those islands, and that no definitive character ought to be attached to their action." Since then there have been consultations and correspondence between the two Governments, but no hint of evacuation on the part of France. The consequence is that the Australian Colonies are gravely dissatisfied; nor is it any secret that, although a report of the discussion does not appear in the blue-book of the Colonial Conference, very animated debates took place on the New Hebrides question at some of the meetings of the delegates. The contention of our correspondent, Mr. Hogan, is the contention of the people of Australia almost without exception—that they protest most strongly against the establishment by France of any new penal colonies in the Western Pacific. The convicts have a trick of escaping; they land in Australia in no small numbers; and Australia does not like it. It is doubtless the case that France has some ulterior motive in keeping her troops in the New Hebrides and in deferring a settlement of the question; she hopes in this way to help us to a settlement such as she would like of the still more important Egyptian question. But whether these are tactics worthy of a great nation is a matter on which we should imagine that there can hardly be two opinions.

[Extract from the *Times*, Tuesday, 6th September, 1887.]

ANGLO-FRENCH QUESTIONS.

Paris, 5th September.

. . . A SPEEDY agreement on the New Hebrides question is also looked for after the diplomatic recess.

[Extract from the *Times*, Thursday, 8th September, 1887.]

ANGLO-FRENCH QUESTIONS.

Paris, 7th September.

THE *Débats*, a Foreign Office organ, plainly states that France will not evacuate the New Hebrides until England has given way on the Suez Canal question. As to the latter, it adds that England has conceded three points—namely, the appointment of an International Commission, periodical meetings of that body, and the presidency of the oldest member of it. A fourth point remains, on which a speedy agreement is hoped for. France proposes that the Commission shall fix the area alongside the Canal within which the erection of fortifications and the concentration of troops shall be forbidden.

[Extract from the *Standard*, Thursday, 8th September, 1887.]

ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

(Through Reuter's Agency.)

Paris, 7th September,

THE *Journal des Débats* this evening, referring to the New Hebrides question, says that an understanding had already been effected between France and England when the Freycinet Cabinet was in power, but M. Flourens, on assuming office as Minister of Foreign Affairs, refused to sign any agreement relating to the New Hebrides before an arrangement had been come to with England on the subject of the neutralisation of the Suez Canal.

The *Débats* explains the questions in relation to the Suez Canal upon which, in succession, an agreement had been established between Great Britain and France, and states that upon the last point, yet to be settled, M. Waddington, the French Ambassador in London, has submitted to Lord Salisbury a proposal that an International Commission should be appointed to define a zone upon the banks of the Canal within which the construction of fortifications and the concentration of troops shall be forbidden.

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

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 9th September.

THE *Liberté* this evening states that, with a view to the departure of the French troops from the New Hebrides, the French Government has requested information from the Governor of New Caledonia concerning the position of the colonists towards the natives and the measures to be eventually taken for their security.

[Extract from the *Standard*, Monday, 19th September, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

(From our Correspondent.)

Vienna, Sunday night.

ACCORDING to the *Politische*, the impending arrangement between England and France respecting

the New Hebrides is based on the evacuation of the islands by France as a preliminary condition. The colonisation of the group will be open to all nations, but each Government will have to watch over the security of its own subjects. The French Government is already taking measures for the protection of the French colony after the evacuation.

No. 7.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 21st October, 1887.

I beg to enclose an extract from a speech by Lord Rosebery yesterday, referring to the continued occupation of the New Hebrides by French troops. I also enclose a letter containing some interesting information from a correspondent of the *Times* in those islands; and an article in last week's *Spectator*, advocating an English military occupation by a force of equal strength to the French.

In the "Atlas Universel," just published in Paris, by Hachette, the islands are coloured as being French possessions.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Friday, 21st October, 1887.]

LORD ROSEBERY AT CASTLE DOUGLAS.

A CONFERENCE under the auspices of the Scottish Liberal Association took place yesterday in the Town-hall, Castle Douglas. Mr. Alexander L. Brown, M.P. for the Border Burghs, presided, and delegates were present from twenty-eight Liberal Associations in the western and south-western districts of Scotland.

LORD ROSEBERY, who was received with cheers, said,— . . . From the pale phantom of political conference I want to take you to a Scottish question for a few minutes, only two or three minutes, which never has received any attention in Scotland at all. It is not connected with Ireland, but a Scottish question, which is as much a Scottish question as any question that could be discussed in this hall, and which I think deserves your serious attention. It is connected with the foreign policy of this country. I do not know whether any of you know much about the New Hebrides in this country. They are a remote group of islands in the southern seas; but they have absorbed some of the best energies of Scotland, and those energies seem likely at this moment to be rendered fruitless, I will not say by the inaction of this Government, but what looks suspiciously like the inaction of this Government. I want to direct the attention of this country and this nation to this subject, because I hold, as Scotchmen, we are greatly to blame for not putting it more forward. There was a convention between Great Britain and France that the territory of the New Hebrides should be respected by both; but in May last year the French Government of New Caledonia, which is New Caledonia only in name, despatched a military expedition to the New Hebrides on the pretext of avenging some murders that had taken place in that part of the world, which murders do not seem to have been satisfactorily established; and that military expedition to the New Hebrides, which has remained there ever since, so far as we can learn has not taken any measures to avenge those murders, but what it has done is this: to set up in all the islands the tricolour flag of France, to build permanent barracks, and to establish, so far as we can gather, a permanent occupation of these islands. Now, gentlemen, in my opinion there is no remonstrance that the Government should have spared in order to prevent anything so discreditable both to this country and to France. (Cheers.) We, the late Government, the late Liberal Government (laughter)—the Government that was more treasonable than any other portion of the nation, and which also was notoriously spiritless in its conduct of foreign affairs—sent a strong remonstrance to the French Government, and not merely did that, but gave orders that a British ship of war should remain in these islands as long as a French soldier remained there. (Cheers.) That was the course they took. I believe if the same course had been pursued after the occupation of the New Hebrides had unhappily taken place we should have had the neutrality of the New Hebrides respected. (Cheers.) But I say again deliberately, I will not blame our Government, because we cannot obtain any information as to what our Government is doing; but the result is that the French are there and they have coloured the New Hebrides by their occupation.

[Extract from the *Times*, Wednesday, 12th October, 1887.]

THE FRENCH IN THE NEW HEBRIDES.

(From an occasional Correspondent.)

Port Sandwich, Mallicolo, 8th August.

It is about 340 miles from Noumea to the Island of Sandwich, or Vaté, the most fertile of the New Hebrides group, and the seat of what settlement there is here—that is, taking "settlement" to be an attempt at colonisation and cultivation. The missionaries and the stray copra traders I do not call settlers. A monthly steamer runs from the capital of the French penal colony to Vaté and Mallicolo, the two islands on which military posts are established. This steamer, the "Calédonien," is the property of the Compagnie des Nouvelles Hebrides, and receives a subsidy of 60,000f. (£2,400) a year, being £200 a trip, or about 5s. a mile. The "Calédonien" is a little craft of 110 tons, and can only accommodate half a dozen passengers. She is principally a cargo-boat, and has been running to the islands for years, carrying copra and other produce. That this vessel

now assumes the dignity of a French mail-packet astonishes even people in Noumea. But the subsidy was obtained in Paris by the *deus ex machina* of the New Hebrides Company there, and is very useful in assisting to pay the working expenses and salaries of the officials, which it is more than hinted are considerably in excess of the income derived from raising maize and coffee and trading in copra, the latter being the principal source of revenue. In the copra trade this company, which has such high-sounding pretensions, enters into undignified competition with the "beach-combers" of British and other nationalities long settled in the different islands. And it generally gets worsted. The natives will never trade with a Frenchman when they can do so with an Englishman, or one speaking the English tongue sufficiently to pass for an Englishman. So an English captain of long experience in the island trade has recently been appointed manager of the "fleet" of the New Hebrides Company, which consists of one steamer, two small schooners, and a cutter, with a brigantine, which is now engaged in enticing labourers from other islands to work on the company's plantations. The "recruiter" of this labour ship is also an Englishman; and another Englishman occupies the same position on a schooner at present in the Solomon group, which is likewise engaging labourers for the company. When it is known that the manager in question was five years ago the hero of a notorious trial, in which he was charged at Noumea with kidnapping some ninety natives at the Solomon Islands, and when it is known that these English recruiters engage the "boys" ostensibly to work on Queensland plantations, one becomes dubious as to whether the recruiting may not become kidnapping, and the nominally free service slavery.

In nothing is the immunity which the New Hebrides Company enjoys in these seas so apparent as in this matter of the labour trade. Any ship recruiting labour for New Caledonia carried a Government agent, who, as in the case of the officers on the Fijian and Queensland vessels, was supposed to see that none but fair means were used in persuading the natives to leave their island homes for a term of service in the French colony. As a matter of fact, these duties were performed in a very perfunctory way. English recruiters were always carried, and it is generally known that their powers of persuasion were used on the natives to engage them for an English colony. With foreknowledge no "boy" would recruit for New Caledonia. But when landed there he was generally fairly treated, and the Government officials took good care that his wages were duly paid, and that he was returned to his native shores at the expiration of his three years of service, unless he wished to make another engagement. In the Bureau of the Director of the Interior at Noumea one found a complete record of every native imported into New Caledonia. With the exception of the deceit used in recruiting there was not much to complain of. But the vessels flying the French flag now engaged in the labour trade on behalf of the New Hebrides Company carry no Government agents, and are under no official supervision. There is no guarantee that the natives will be returned to their homes at the end of the "three yams" for which they all engage to serve. It is known that many of them have not been so returned. There is no guarantee that they will be paid in proportion to their services. There is no guarantee that they will not be grossly ill-used. Brought from the Solomon Islands and landed on Vati, the natives are really slaves dependent on the caprice of the plantation manager. There is no law to protect them, no authority to which they can appeal. If they have been violently kidnapped there is no chance of the deed ever becoming known. The only result will be that the next vessel from Queensland will be attacked in revenge, and British lives will be sacrificed. Kidnapping may take place individually or wholesale. The captain of the "Venus" was tried at Noumea for enticing the ninety natives on board to move an iron tank in the hold, which was bolted to the deck. The hatches were simply clapped on them, and the vessel sailed away. It was partly through the exertions of Bishop Selwyn that the doings of this piratical craft were exposed. The trial was a *cause célèbre* in New Caledonia. But the highest influence was brought to bear. Mr. John Higginson daily drove the merchant skipper to Court in his carriage, and an acquittal was the result. With no law in the New Hebrides, no chance of being brought to account, such a proceeding might very well be repeated and the captain easily earn £10 a head from the company. I am told of one case where nine boys from Mallicolo, taken to a plantation at Port Vila, alleged that they were kidnapped, and ended by stealing an open boat and rowing 80 miles by sea to their home. While Queensland vessels are subject to such rigid restrictions in the labour-trade, it is absurd that French ships can carry on what is virtually a slave-traffic on behalf of the New Hebrides Company.

I left Noumea in one of the only two schooners floating the British flag in the New Hebrides. The course was inside the great reef which surrounds New Caledonia till we rounded the south-east point of the island, and sailed into the open ocean through the Havannah Pass; thence north-east through the Loyalty Islands, Lifu, and Mare, till we sighted Erromango, and on northwards to Vati. One advantage of cruising in the New Hebrides is that you seldom lose sight of land. One island no sooner fades away in the horizon than you "pick up" another. In two days after clearing the Havannah Pass we cast anchor in Port Vila, on Vati. There is an eruption of French flags round this harbour. The tricolour flies over a store and warehouse at the water's edge, on two houses on the slope of the hill, and on a little rock not three yards in diameter, which is joined at low water to the small but fertile island of Vila, off which we are anchored. You imagine at first that this is a signal connected with surveying operations. But night and day the flag floats on this patch of stone, which a charge of dynamite would blow to pieces. As the natives would sell no land in Vila, the manager of the New Hebrides Company bought this rock from the chief for £2, and the tricolour is a sign to all that it is French property. There seems something childishly absurd in this. Yet I imagine that the French official is not by any means a fool. I think the floating of the flag here is more than to please the eye or satisfy the vanity of an individual. Connected with Vila as it is, it is a sign of sovereignty which the natives may get accustomed to. And if by chance some mischievous spirit should pull down the tricolour it would be an act to be avenged by confiscation of the island, and if the natives resisted it would give an excuse for the permanent occupation of Vati and afterwards of the whole of the New Hebrides.

"An insult to the French flag" could easily be magnified in Europe to "an attack on French settlers" and "outrages by the natives," which is what the authorities require as a palliation for the action of sending troops hither.

It must be remembered that when more than a year ago two companies of infantry were landed on Vaté and Mallicolo the excuse given by the authorities in Paris was that it was merely a temporary measure. The soldiers were camped on shore to defend French settlers from the attacks of the natives in the future, as well as to exact reparation for outrages in the past. It was argued that France had as perfect right in operating by land to avenge the murders of Frenchmen as Great Britain's men-of-war had to shell villages. As regards any temporary action, this theory might be correct if it had any foundation in fact, or if it had been carried out in practice. But, taking the French view of the case, there was never any excuse for the landing of troops on Vaté. There is no record in our generation of any white man having been killed here, and there has never been any trouble of any kind with the natives. The troops simply took possession of the best harbour in the islands, by their presence acting as the official support to the doings of the New Hebrides Company. And their presence has also been used to provoke the natives to overt action. But for the Presbyterian missionaries, who have counselled moderation, the ignorant savages might have broken out, when little mercy would have been shown to them, and annexation would have followed. I cannot help thinking that all the proceedings here have been the result of a pre-meditated scheme, which has not succeeded as well as its promoters wished. This flag on the rock on the sands of the Island of Vila seems to be part of that scheme of provoking the natives, which, if successful, will end in the island becoming the property of the French New Hebrides Company, and its acres cut up into blocks for the colonists to be imported from France, who will die here as their predecessors settled in Port Vila this year have died. The best of immigrants cannot succeed in this climate, and the best are not at all likely to come here.

Bacon, in his essay "Of Plantations," gave good advice to the adventurers who founded Virginia. He wrote: "The people wherewith you plant ought to be gardeners, ploughmen, labourers, smiths, carpenters, joiners, fishermen, fowlers, with some few apothecaries, surgeons, cooks, and bakers." And again, "It is a shameful and unblessed thing to take the scum of people and wicked men to be the people with whom you plant; and not only so, but it spoileth the plantation, for they will ever live like rogues and not fall to work, but be lazy and do mischief and spend victuals and be quickly weary, and then certify over to their country to the discredit of the plantation." Without saying that the immigrants sent out to work and occupy the lands of the New Hebrides Company were the "scum of the people," they have proved just as useless here. Female Parisians accustomed to buy all their food ready cooked, women having never done more of household work than to light a charcoal fire to boil their coffee with, and to whom even the baking of a loaf of bread was a mystery, are as much out of place in a new land as any grand lady of the Faubourg St. Honoré. Small shopkeepers, pedlars, and clerks, to whom the use of an axe and a spade is an unknown art, men lacking both physical strength and skill, finding the handling of tools as difficult to acquire as penmanship to an ignorant adult, would be more helpless in the forests of America or the bush of Australia than half the members of the Jockey Club. The latter would to an extent know how to use their muscles: the gymnasium in youth, and afterwards riding, shooting, and fencing, having trained their eyes and arms. In the healthiest of colonies such people as have been sent here would be failures, "and be quickly weary, and certify to the discredit of the plantation." But put on shore in this country, where no white man can do labouring-work, where fever haunts every yard of ground, the Parisian immigrants looked at the jungle-covered acres which were pointed out to them as their future homes and lost heart and cried to be returned to Noumea and to France, and were taken sick and died, till now only seven remain at Port Vila. These men, of stronger constitutions or better heart, live on in hope of getting the grants to their twenty-five hectares of land, when they imagine that they can sell the properties which originally were bought from the natives for about a stick of tobacco the acre. The best of the immigrants here is undoubtedly the Alsatian Klehm, who says that his companions were mostly lazy and unfit to work. Klehm, however, has lost his eldest son by fever. I have pleasure in recording his testimony to the great kindness extended to the women and children by Madame Bernier, wife of the manager of the plantations of the New Hebrides Company at Port Vila. Klehm says: "We were left here in the greatest misery, and without the attention of this good lady and her husband more would have perished. She was our guardian angel." Madame Bernier is a Bourbonnaise, and therefore can stand the climate better than a European. But even she suffers from the fever, and often has to go to Noumea to recover her health. From the slight acquaintance I have with Madame Bernier, I can quite believe Klehm's testimony.

Klehm is the "curly-headed boy" of the colonisation scheme. He is pointed out as an example of what can be done by the right kind of people here—those, namely, who do not mind sickness or death in their families, and have money enough to hire native labour and buy provisions until they can obtain a title to their lands. Klehm has a grass house on the shores opposite the Island of Melé, and has cleared a patch of land and planted it with maize. If people can live on corn they can feed well here, for this cereal in the New Hebrides produces three crops a year, often averaging 150 bushels to the acre. The officials of the French company are now, I find, endeavouring to cover up the gross failure of colonisation at Port Vila by citing Klehm as the industrious colonist, and all those who have died or returned to Noumea as the discontented "ne'er-do-wells." But who brought them hither? However unfitted every man or woman might be, they came in ignorance, seduced by glowing promises to the ear, while their eyes were pleased by coloured plans of the settlement of Melé, with roads and streets which as yet only exist in the imagination of the promoters of the company's colonisation. This same powerful imagination has magnified the acreage of the properties of the New Hebrides Company to nearly the entire acreage of the islands. On Vaté they at first claimed more land than it possesses. To have a share in

such a magnificent estate tempted the small stationer from the Luxembourg quarter, the last returned colonist I saw in Noumea. I quote his case as a sample of the "ne'er-do-wells." He was a man who had hoarded a little money, and wished, as he said, to make a future for his children, as well as to save his two boys from the conscription. Enticed by the programme of the Colonisation Society, he invested most of his store in seeds and tools and outfit presumed to be suitable for a colonist in the New Hebrides. Arrived here, he found not the prairie which he had imagined, but a thick jungle, which it was impossible he could ever clear by his own puny exertions. He and his family were all seized by the fever. One child died, and they returned in the greatest misery to Noumea, ruined in health and fortune, and with no prospect but beggary before them when the father's last franc is gone. As I listened to his tale I felt that his maledictions against those whose false tales induced him to break up and leave his little home were justifiable. If this New Hebrides immigration scheme is not a swindle, like that of the Marquis de Ray's in New Britain, it is as bad as the Brazilian attempt to settle English farm-labourers on the tropical rivers of South America, the disastrous effects of which were exposed in the *Times* in 1873, and the immigration from Great Britain stopped in consequence.

French interests at Port Vila, then, are represented by the remains of the first batch of colonists, by an independent French settler, by two or three half-caste Bourbonnais, and by the store and plantation of the New Hebrides Company. This latter, planted with coffee and corn, is really a fine property. It was cleared and established by Captain Donald Macleod, and four years back sold by him to the company. A large amount of native labour is now employed here—men and women to the number of two hundred from the other islands of the group or from the Solomons. As set forth, their service is slavery, or of a character which may be made worse than any slavery depicted in the literature of the abolitionists. Here there is neither law nor public opinion to protect the labourer. The independent French settler is a gentleman at deadly feud with the company, and has received into his service boys who have run away from the neighbouring plantation, defying his neighbours to claim them. But then there is no guarantee that they will be any better treated by Monsieur C. The other settlers around Port Vila are two Swedes and a Portuguese. The Presbyterian missionary, Mr. Mackenzie, resides some four miles distant, but this, lying within his cure, is weekly visited by him. English interests here at present, then, are only represented by the missionary, and an attempt is being made to drive that gentleman out by the introduction of a Marist priest, who is already making trouble at Melé. The two priests settled on Vaté are without doubt brought hither in their quality as Frenchmen. It is not only the spiritual influence of Mr. Mackenzie that is to be undermined, but he, as a British subject, is to be ousted. The same course is to be pursued with Mr. Macdonald at Havannah Harbour. People who, like myself, may not be actively enthusiastic in missionary work will perhaps sympathize with their countrymen. If there are any vested interests in the New Hebrides, they are certainly those of the Presbyterian Mission, which can point to its thirty-five years of work, to its fourteen divines now labouring in the cause, and to the total expenditure of £170,000, money collected in Great Britain and the colonies, as its claim to having the greatest interests here. Are others to reap where it has sown?

The company has done one good thing, however, in settling a medical man at Port Vila. The new doctor has just arrived. He is reported to be subsidised by the Government in addition to his salary from the company. Most of the "colonists" having died or left, his practice, except among the natives, will be limited until the arrival of the next batch of hopeful immigrants from France. The doctor will then be able to alleviate their sufferings somewhat, and perhaps prevent deaths. But he cannot prevent fever. Every one has it here. All work, except such as may consist in supervision of the natives, is impossible to a white man. And so it is little wonder that one finds mere paths on shore, and that the roads and streets marked on the plans in Paris are on the spot not even pegged out. No work, except that absolutely necessary, is done in such a climate. Port Vila possesses a town upon paper. But in a state of nature it is one mass of tropical bush, variegated with cocoanuts, the plantation clearing being but a patch on the hillsides. The houses are so few that, hidden in the trees, they almost escape notice. The tricolour is the only thing out of place. The same flag is hoisted as we round the point at Tukutuk and enter the passage between Hat Island and the mainland, which leads to Havannah Harbour, three hours' sail from Port Vila. But, as we pass the missionary station, the Union Jack is run up by the Rev. Mr. Macdonald, who, with Captain Macleod, represents English interests here. French interests are represented by a store belonging to the New Hebrides Company and the camp of the troops in occupation. Wherever there is a chance the tricolour has been hoisted. Every building on the shore, every boat on the waters owned or occupied by the French is under the flag of France. This seems childish, but is, I believe, part of a plan. The authorities may think that as "trade follows the flag" colonisation will also follow. But take away the troops from Havannah Harbour, and France could here only claim the "interests" of a storekeeper and a liberated convict from New Caledonia as against those of the Englishmen, Mr. Macdonald and Captain Macleod. The latter has the only brick building and the finest residence in the New Hebrides. It is separated from the French camp by a brawling stream, which here and there has formed deep holes in the coral rock through which it runs, basins overshadowed by spreading trees forming the most delicious bathing-places imaginable, where the officers of Her Majesty's ship "Raven," which is now cruising around the New Hebrides, take refreshing dips on their monthly visits to this harbour, when the English flag is displayed on the waters in opposition to the tricolour ashore. The latter, however, looks to the traveller as if it were there to stay. "Nous y sommes, et nous y resterons," boast the officials in Noumea.

It was in May, 1886, that the Acting-Governor of New Caledonia, Monsieur Jacques Marie Benjamin Arthur Ortus, Knight of the Legion of Honour, and Lieutenant-Colonel of Infanterie de Marine, in pursuance of some plan of his own or under instructions, despatched two companies of troops to the New Hebrides. One hundred and fourteen rank and file were landed at Havannah

Harbour on the 1st June, the like number at Port Sandwich on the 5th June. Certainly they stop there, but that is all they do. The pretence of operations against the natives, necessitated by outrages on French citizens, has never been carried into action. There was no ground for this pretence then; there has been no ground given by the natives since. The military posts have simply been guards for the trading stores of the New Hebrides Company, and evidences of the intention of French occupation *de jure* as well as *de facto*. Monsieur Ortus, it may be remarked, has been promoted to the rank of Colonel. The two posts are now reduced to fifty men each, who protect the transactions of the New Hebrides Company, the interests of a dozen French settlers and traders, and a dozen French copra-makers of the "beachcomber" stamp who are scattered about the islands—that is, there are two soldiers for each civilian. British taxpayers would object to such an arrangement; the soldiers themselves do not like it. Life, says the young lieutenant who is in command at Havannah Harbour, is *triste* here, and the men have all suffered terribly from fever. The extra fatigue duty in making their houses of wattle and lime, and thatched roofs, buildings cool and comfortable and adapted to the climate, has, perhaps, had its effect. But every one gets the fever in the rainy season here, if not in the present dry winter months. Even the seamen on Her Majesty's ship "Raven," who practically, it may be said, are never ashore, have suffered severely. A third of the crew has been down with sickness at one time. In this connection it may be noticed as an extraordinary fact that the sailors who were fever-stricken were nearly all members of the Good Templar organization. It is narrated in "Cook's Voyages" that when the crew of the "Endeavour" was attacked with fever at Batavia, the surgeon and others dying, "it was remarkable that every individual had been ill excepting the sailmaker, who was an old man between seventy and eighty years of age, and who was drunk every day during the residence of our people in Batavia." French soldiers are temperate enough—they have few opportunities to be otherwise; but the fever in the New Hebrides affects them worse than it does many an old "beachcomber," whose only god is square gin.

Havannah Harbour has for many years been the most important calling-place for vessels trading in the Western Pacific. Ships from Queensland and Fiji made this their rendezvous. Landlocked as it is by protecting islands, a better harbour cannot be found in the South Seas. Until a year or two back hardly any flag was seen here but that of England. The interests of England were prominent on shore. There were other *bonâ fide* British settlers like Captain Macleod, who cleared and cultivated the land. Even at present the only plantation of importance, after that of the French company at Port Vila, is owned by Mrs. Glissan, an English lady, widow of the gentleman who made a magnificent and fertile property out of primal jungle. The coffee grown at Sivaree is some of the best in the world. Besides the two Presbyterian missionaries settled on Vaté, there is one on the adjacent island of Muna, and another at Tongoa within three hours' sail. So English interests even now are quite equal to those of the French. Great Britain can here claim the right of discovery, of occupation, and of usage, while the French claims are only of recent date, and these the partly fictitious ones of the New Hebrides Company. Irrespective of any other aspect of the question, to allow the French to retain possession of Havannah Harbour would be to give them one of the best ports in the Pacific, unsurpassed as a coaling-station. There is no coal stored there as yet. Her Majesty's ships now go to Noumea to coal. In New Caledonia large supplies have been accumulated by the authorities in readiness for war. Havannah Harbour in this respect could be made equally important, and English interests could easily have been maintained here, and the whole group gradually absorbed, if any encouragement or protection had been given to the early settlers, instead of letting them be officially considered as legally pariahs outside all law and nationality. There is no doubt that many of the "beachcomber" type would be pleased to be so considered and left alone. But others wanted some security for their properties, some legal recognition of their rights as British citizens, which they were unable to obtain from Australia or Fiji. Sir Arthur Gordon, when Governor of Fiji, once it is said proposed to appoint Mr. Hugh Romilly, C.M.G., as Assistant Commissioner at Havannah Harbour. But he was sent to study savage life in the Solomon Islands. The appointment here of such an Assistant Commissioner, under the Governor of Fiji, would even now be of great benefit as a practical evidence of English interests in the New Hebrides. Such an official would examine the *bonâ fides* of the titles to land claimed by British subjects. If in the old days no Englishman could obtain any legal recognition of his claim to any property here, the system lately inaugurated is perhaps worse. Documents presumed to be land-titles can be sent to Fiji and registered in the office of the High Commissioner for Western Polynesia on payment of a small fee. This registration is only legally considered to be an acknowledgment of the applicant's claim, but by many it is held to be a good title, and certain British subjects resident in Noumea have lately been buying land from the natives, have had the titles registered in Fiji, and have then sold to the French company, to whom the natives would not have given their lands. *Bonâ fide* settlers here would receive protection and assistance from a Deputy Commissioner, but he would discourage as much as possible all land speculations by Englishmen resident in Noumea and New Caledonia.

From Havannah Harbour I cruised round the group. Nowhere are there any "French interests" to be seen except those of copra-makers—men who drift from island to island, leading a vagabond, careless life, victims to fever or square gin, whose career is generally ended by a bloody death. There are only two *bonâ fide* settlers north of Vaté. One is Mr. George de Latour, an English gentleman who has many acres of maize on his property at Aoré, a small island south of Espiritu Santo, the Austral Land of the Holy Spirit named by Quiros, the first white navigator in these seas. But of the copra-makers more than half are English or Scandinavians. The English flag floats over most of the ships we meet: labour vessels recruiting from Queensland or Fiji. And on every beach where we land there is some one to speak English, of a "pigeon" kind certainly, but still English. The French or Bourbonnais copra-makers have to learn this dialect to communicate with the natives. At Port Sandwich, on the south-west side of the Island of Mallicolo,

is the second French military post in these islands. This harbour, though not so large at certain seasons of the year, is considered by nautical authorities to afford even better shelter than that of Havannah. The camp is on the south side. Under some cocoa palms, scattered about a low sandy spit of land, are the brown grass huts of the soldiers. There is a background of hill and thick tropical bush. It looks a charming little bit for a scene-painter. The officers in their white tunics and brass buttons, the soldiers in their solar topees, add to the theatrical impression—the idea of a “set” in some extravaganza at the Gaiety or Eden. The men walk about in just the listless make-believe manner which supersedes on a stage generally affect. There is an air of unreality which is borne out in fact. For this post is even more a sham than that at Havannah Harbour. To guard the adjacent copra store of the New Hebrides Company, to keep the tricolour flying, to parade at *reveille* and *rappel*, and to sicken with fever—this is not real work for the brave soldiers of France. They know that there has been no necessity for their presence here; that the pretence of action against the natives will never be carried out. To go on the war-path against the latter would be impossible here, even if there were any excuse for it. French as well as British copra-traders have been killed on Mallicolo. Some, it is hinted, deserved their fate. But to protect or avenge these a post of soldiers is of little avail. At the present moment the gunboat, the “Dive,” from Noumea, is shelling some villages on the adjacent island of Ambrym, no one exactly knows why, but that is the only form of military operations which the French will take in these islands. Here in Port Sandwich the French troops are merely a sign of sham authority, a cover to the doings of the New Hebrides Company. The officers and men know this, and, when you get confidential with them, are as loud in their curses against the wirepullers in Paris, whose money-making machinations have caused their banishment to this unhealthy spot, as are the colonists of Port Vila. The only man here who is not a “super” is the doctor, and he has enough to do.

The French camp and the adjacent store of the New Hebrides Company are on the most unhealthy site possible to select. The English flag floats over a house on the bluff opposite, and catches the fresh breezes of the ocean, which assist in dispersing the miasma. Here is the large store of Mr. Lee Walker, formerly of Wolverhampton, who is clearing and cultivating the adjacent land, raising vegetables to supply passing ships and making experiments in tropical agriculture. The tobacco which he has planted seems to flourish well. Indigo also promises to be a most profitable article of cultivation if the same conditions of labour as in India applied here. There is no disputing the fertility of the New Hebrides. These islands could be rendered very valuable if any security of tenure were given to English or Australian settlers. As it now is, these are handicapped in every possible way. While French settlers can obtain labour, as I have before set forth, British subjects are liable to be called to account by the commanders of the men-of-war if they attempt to “recruit.” It is quite right that there should be proper regulations, and that Englishmen should not have the power over natives whom they might employ which Frenchmen in these islands possess. But *bona fide* English settlers like the few I have mentioned should not be debarred in properly employing natives for legitimate work. As an instance of the “slavery” mentioned in connection with the operations of the New Hebrides Company, I may mention that we landed a returned labour hand from one of the company’s plantations at a village near this port. Perhaps the French captain who asked us to do this had his reasons for not visiting the place. The “boy” was useful on board ship, and worth more than his passage. He had been in Queensland before, and spoke English fairly. For nearly five years he had been employed by the New Hebrides Company, having been “recruited” soon after its formation in 1882. When we arrived at the half-mile of beach which he called his home, I accompanied the man ashore. The wealth with which he returned, the payment for his years of service, consisted of a rifle, ten rounds of ammunition, and a small deal box containing a few yards of print and some tobacco. The whole was not worth £4. Now, if engaged for work in Queensland, he would have been paid at the end of his three years of service £18 in money, which he could have expended as he chose. “Boys” who have been to Queensland learn the value of money; they do not spend all their coin before returning home, but often keep an amount to purchase tobacco and calico from passing ships. In this present cruise I have seen natives with five to ten English sovereigns in their possession, which they knew how to make the most of. The Island of Api was said by one skipper to be “full of money.” A New Hebrides labour hand in Queensland has his rights before the law, and is paid as regularly as any white man. In the service of the French New Hebrides Company he is a slave for a longer or a shorter term, and when he is returned to his native home he is paid off with any paltry present the agent or manager may like to give him.

But on arrival here I learn of even a worse case from the Rev. D. Macdonald, of Havannah Harbour. The brigantine referred to as “recruiting” labourers for the company’s plantations in Port Vila two weeks back landed “seventy head” there. There were a number who protested they had not been engaged to work at this place. One night twenty-five of them took a large boat, and with only two oars rowed out to sea, endeavouring to escape. But they were driven ashore at Hat Island, just outside Havannah Island, a small desolate, uninhabited spot. Pursued by a cutter with armed crew, like dogs they were lashed into it and taken back to slavery to work for a term in irons. Should any of these boys ever get back to their native islands, little wonder if they attempt to avenge themselves on any helpless Frenchman. This is how men are dealt with; young women have a value of another sort. These French traders have a regulation price for a girl—£30 will buy one, body and soul. Perhaps the trader buys her from her parents or even husband. Women are but chattels in many islands. But too often I believe they are “recruited” nominally for work in the colonies. In any case, this buying and selling of human flesh is slavery worse than any in the Southern States, as there is no public opinion to restrain brutality. The traveller at present voyaging in the New Hebrides acquires three prominent impressions—that the much-talked-of French interests here are sham and fictitious, and that the much-abused Queensland labour traffic is highly popular with the natives who profit by the visits of the English ships. But the most

serious impression is that a British subject has no rights in the New Hebrides which a Frenchman is bound to respect. For I hear that in Havannah Harbour a fence erected to protect land belonging to the Presbyterian mission has been torn down, and cattle belonging to the company driven in to destroy the plantations. This property, a large tract of land, worth perhaps £4,000, was in 1882, in presence of the commander of Her Majesty's ship "Sandfly," legally transferred by the natives to the New Hebrides Synods, that they and their heirs for ever might be protected from any attempt to despoil them of their plantations by force or fraud. These plantations are the only means of support of the Christian natives. It is doubtless because they are Protestant Christians that they are so outraged. Mr. Macdonald intends appealing to Admiral Fairfax on his expected visit to this group at the end of the month. Should he obtain no redress he may well say that the Anglo-Saxon is played out and the French are masters in the New Hebrides.

[Extract from the *Spectator*, Saturday, 15th October, 1887.]

THE FRENCH AND THE NEW HEBRIDES.

In the *Times* of Wednesday there was a long account of the French occupation of the New Hebrides, part of which deserves more attention from the English Government and the English public than we fear it is likely to get at the present time. The French have not done much in the way of colonising the islands. The wrong sort of people have come out, and the majority of them have either died or gone back to France. It is very doubtful, however, whether the right sort of people would have fared much better. The climate is one in which white men cannot work, in which they may think themselves fortunate if they can even live. What the French have done is to establish a new and apparently flourishing slave-settlement. The plantations of the New Hebrides Company at Port Vila, in the Island of Vaté, are worked by some two hundred men and women "recruited" from the other islands of the group, or from the Solomon Islands. Englishmen have not many stones to throw at other nations in respect of the trade in native labour. There have been horrors enough in the past to make them very chary of criticism on this head. But at least we took what seemed to be adequate precautions against obvious abuses. If they sometimes failed to answer the purpose, it was the fault of the agents through whom we had to work. The general success of our efforts is shown by the most significant fact that the New Hebrides Company, which is French, is obliged to employ Englishmen as recruiters. The reason for this can only be that the natives will not willingly work in any but English colonies. The protection they enjoy there is at least sufficient to make the service fairly popular, and it is only by deluding them into the belief that they are going to Queensland or Fiji that the New Hebrides Company is able to obtain labourers at all. The natives have very good reason for making this distinction. The vessels of the New Hebrides Company carry no Government agent, and are under no official supervision. There is no one to see that the natives are sent home at the end of the three years for which they are nominally engaged; and when they are sent home it seems, in the matter of money, to be pretty much as they came. A company which recruits its labourers in this fashion must regard with dismay the prospect of being left without military support in the event of a difficulty with its "boys;" and, in view of what is going on in Paris at this moment, it seems not impossible that the French occupation of the islands may be partly in the interest of the company.

All this would be no concern of Englishmen but for two considerations,—one is, that the military occupation, under cover of which the New Hebrides Company follows its trade, is in open violation of a treaty obligation; the other, that this violation goes on under the eyes of our own colonists. Few things, it may at once be admitted, are more difficult than to say when the fulfilment of a treaty obligation ought to be demanded at all hazards. In public as in private affairs there are rights upon which a wise man will not insist, though he is clearly entitled to them. He says frankly he could have them if he chose, but only at the cost of more trouble or more annoyance than the rights are worth. At the same time he will not, if he be really a wise man, ignore the risks in which thus to forego his rights may land him. The history of bankruptcy, for example, is to a great extent the history of dishonesty nourished by the supineness of creditors. A man does not care whether he can pay his debts or not, because he hopes that those to whom they are due will be equally indifferent. If the omission to enforce a right leads to the denial of other rights, it may be a more costly process than the enforcement would have been.

Is it quite certain that this may not be true of the French occupation of the New Hebrides? To our minds, we confess, it appears the very reverse of certain. Our conduct of foreign affairs, as we pointed out last week, is passing through a very critical stage. Eventually, we believe, it will regain the vigour, the decision, the willingness to submit to great sacrifices for great ends, which formerly belonged to it. But in the interval those qualities are wanting, and they are wanting at a time when Europe is uneasy, and when the action of every great Power is very closely scanned. It is useless to expect that England can sit still while an undertaking quite recently given to her by France is ostentatiously disregarded, and not suffer by her apparent indifference in the opinion of other nations. In what ways she may suffer may be seen by a passage in the *Hamburg Correspondent*, which was translated in the *St. James's Gazette* of Tuesday. The German writer sets out what the French have done in the matter, and then goes on thus: "Instead of categorically demanding the evacuation of the New Hebrides and the fulfilment of the undisputed agreement, England has confined herself to feeble representations. At the Colonial Conference in May, Lord Salisbury expressed himself so pusillanimously on the question that one of the Australian representatives assured him that his speech would have done the highest honour to a French Premier. . . . On the whole, we must regard England as in a very unsatisfactory position. Russia, France, and America are openly of opinion that, even under Lord Salisbury, it is time to say, as a Russian diplomatist remarked to the English Ambassador in St. Petersburg ten years ago: 'Resistance, my Lord—that is a word which no longer has a place in the English dictionary.'" If this extract represents the opinion held of England in Germany as well, the conclusion inevitably

follows that things are coming, if they have not come, to that pass in which England is neither valued as a friend nor feared as an enemy. In the present instance there is no question of Continental intervention, or of mixing ourselves up with other men's quarrels. The simple facts are that we thought the independence of the New Hebrides important enough to make a treaty about, but that, when that treaty is violated, we think it prudent to hold our tongues. It is not in Europe only that our action in the matter of the New Hebrides is closely watched. It excites at least as much attention, and far more irritation, in Australia. There is no question upon which the Australians feel so keenly. Rightly or wrongly, they feel that it concerns their whole future as a community. Even if there were no treaty to be invoked, it would be seemly to examine the demands of the colonists in regard to this question with care and sympathy. Then, however, we might say, at the end of the investigation, that we thought their fears unfounded or exaggerated. As it is, any criticism of their fears is out of place. What they ask is not that we should sympathize with their excitement, but simply that we should demand the execution of a specific treaty which was concluded for their benefit, and which they have never consented to waive. That is an awkward request for a Power like England to refuse to colonies like Australia.

There are two steps the English Government might very well take which, though they fall far short of that insistence on the specific performance of the treaty to which the Australians think they are entitled, would yet show the French Government that England is more in earnest than they have been accustomed, perhaps, to think her. In the first, they might refuse, categorically and unmistakably, to discuss any other question in connection with that of the New Hebrides. This would at least show the French Government that we are alive to the special and serious nature of the issue. In the second place, they might despatch to the islands an English force of equal strength with the French force. This would only involve the maintenance there of a hundred men, but it would be an intimation alike to France and to Australia that a French occupation would never be permitted by England. There would be nothing in this to which the French Government could reasonably object, since, if it is not a violation of the treaty for French troops to be in the islands, it must equally be no violation of it for English troops to be there. The advantage of this expedient would be that, as a joint occupation can serve no special French purpose, useful or sentimental, France would no longer have any motive for keeping any soldiers in the islands, since the only result of so doing would be to keep English troops there also. It is an expedient to which no valid objection can well be raised, and which would probably have the effect of bringing to an end the incident which would have provoked it.

No. 8.

TELEGRAM from the SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES to the GOVERNOR of NEW ZEALAND.

(Received 26th October, 1887.)

CONVENTION signed New Hebrides. French undertake to evacuate within four months.

No. 9.

The SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES to the GOVERNOR.

SIR,—

Downing Street, 28th October, 1887.

I have the honour to enclose the draft of the New Hebrides Convention, which, as you will see from M. Flourens's note of the 22nd October instant, has been accepted by the French Government; and I desire to express the satisfaction with which I am thus able to announce to you that this question has been settled.

Governor Sir W. F. D. Jervois, G.C.M.G., C.B., &c.

I have, &c.,

H. T. HOLLAND.

Enclosures.

The FOREIGN OFFICE to the COLONIAL OFFICE.

SIR,—

Foreign Office, 24th October, 1887.

With reference to previous correspondence, I am directed by the Marquis of Salisbury to transmit to you herewith, to be laid before the Secretary of State for the Colonies, for his Lordship's information, copies of papers upon the subject of the New Hebrides.

I have, &c.,

JULIAN PAUNCEFOTE.

Sub-Enclosure 1.

The Marquis of SALISBURY to Mr. EGERTON.

SIR,—

Foreign Office, 21st October, 1887.

I enclose to you the draft of a Convention with respect to the New Hebrides, which is the result of the various communications and conversations that have passed upon the subject. The controversy has lasted longer than was anticipated, and has created some disquietude in the minds of Her Majesty's subjects in Australia; and I hope that by accepting the enclosed proposals the French Government may be able to bring it to a satisfactory termination.

In the year 1878 the Marquis d'Harcourt, then French Ambassador at this Court, verbally assured Lord Derby that France entertained no intention of annexing the New Hebrides, and

received from Lord Derby a corresponding assurance in return. When in the beginning of last year two of the islands of this group were occupied by a small French force, a general apprehension was created, especially among the colonists of Australia and New Zealand, that a policy was in contemplation not consistent with the assurances the Marquis d'Harcourt had been instructed to convey. The French Government have, however, constantly assured us, in a categorical manner, that they entertained no projects of annexation, and that they were prepared to remove their troops as soon as sufficient security was given to them that the lives and properties of French settlers upon the islands would be protected from attacks by the natives. The provisions of the draft Convention which is enclosed seem well calculated to effect the objects which both Governments desire. But the acceptance of it by Her Majesty's Government must be entirely conditional on an undertaking by the French Government that the evacuation shall not be postponed beyond a fixed date.

The French Government are anxious that this opportunity shall be taken to release them from an engagement entered into in 1847 to the effect that they would not assume the protectorate of the Island of Raiatea, near Tahiti. The desirability of acceding to this proposal, under certain conditions, has for several years been admitted by Her Majesty's Government. In the autumn of 1880 it was proposed to make this concession simultaneously with a convention which was being negotiated for the settlement of the disputed fishery questions in Newfoundland. In view of the probability of this convention being concluded, Lord Granville, in October, 1880, consented "to a provisional French protectorate over the island for a strictly limited time." The agreement for that purpose was renewed at the end of six months, and since then has been renewed every six months up to the present time. The Newfoundland Convention, which was to have made the French protectorate of Raiatea definitive, was signed in October, 1885; but it contained a provision that it should not be ratified until it had been accepted by the Legislature of Newfoundland. Before its signature it had been submitted to that colony, and, in its ultimate form, was not objected to by them. There was no ground to apprehend its final rejection. After its signature, however, an objection—which proved in the judgment of the colony fatal—was taken to an article in it which gave to the French fishermen liberty to purchase bait in the colonial waters; and during the present year a Bill has passed the Legislature of Newfoundland, and has been approved, which is directly at variance with the stipulation as to the purchase of bait contained in the Convention.

The result of this failure upon Raiatea has been that, contrary to all expectation, the French protectorate has never been made definitive. It does not, however, appear to Her Majesty's Government desirable, or, indeed, practicable, to remit to an aboriginal Administration an island which has been for seven years under French government; and on this account, as well as in view of the peculiar circumstances attending the failure of the Convention of 1885, they are willing to transfer the stipulation in question to the present Convention, subject, of course, to the undertakings given in a *note verbale* to Lord Lyons on the 24th October, 1885.

I have, &c.,
SALISBURY.

Sub-Enclosure 2.

DRAFT OF NEW HEBRIDES CONVENTION.

ARTICLE I.

Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique consent à procéder à l'abrogation de la Déclaration de 1847, relative au groupe des Îles Sous-le-Vent de Tahiti, aussitôt qu'aura été mis à exécution l'accord ci-après formulé pour la protection, à l'avenir, des personnes et des biens aux Nouvelles-Hébrides, au moyen d'une Commission Mixte.

ARTICLE II.

Une Commission Navale Mixte, composée d'officiers de marine appartenant aux stations Française et Anglaise du Pacifique sera immédiatement constituée; elle sera chargée de maintenir l'ordre et de protéger les personnes et les biens des sujets Français et Britanniques dans les Nouvelles-Hébrides.

ARTICLE III.

Une Déclaration à cet effet sera signée par les deux Gouvernements.

ARTICLE IV.

Les Règlements destinés à guider la Commission seront élaborés par les deux Gouvernements, approuvés par eux et transmis aux Commandants Français et Anglais des bâtiments de la station navale du Pacifique, dans un délai qui n'excédera pas quatre mois à partir de la signature de la présente Convention, s'il n'est pas possible de le faire plus tôt.

ARTICLE V.

Dès que ces Règlements auront été approuvés par les deux Gouvernements et que les postes militaires Français auront pu, par suite, être retirés des Nouvelles-Hébrides, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique procédera à l'abrogation de la Déclaration de 1847. Il est entendu que les assurances relatives au commerce et aux condamnés qui sont contenues dans la note verbale du 24 Octobre, 1885, communiquée par M. de Freycinet à Lord Lyons, demeureront en pleine vigueur.

Sub-Enclosure 3.

M. FLOURENS to Mr. EGERTON.

SIR,—

Paris, 22nd October, 1887.

I have received communication of the despatch which Lord Salisbury has addressed to you on the subject of the Convention relating to the New Hebrides and Leeward Islands of Tahiti, which has resulted from communications between the two Governments. The despatch is accom-

panied by the text of the Convention agreed on between the Government. I have assured myself that the text is in conformity with our common intentions, and I give my approbation to it.

It shall therefore be understood that the two Governments will take their measures that the regulations destined to guide the Mixed Naval Commission contemplated by Article No. II. should be elaborated and approved within a maximum period of four months, to date from the signature of the Convention; and I take the engagement, in the name of the Government of the Republic, to cause the evacuation of the New Hebrides by the French military posts at the expiration of this term, if it be not possible to do so earlier.

Accept, &c.,

FLOURENS.

No. 10.

The SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES to the OFFICER ADMINISTERING the GOVERNMENT.
SIR,—

Downing Street, 31st December, 1887.

With reference to my circular despatch of the 28th October, enclosing a draft of the New Hebrides Convention, I have the honour to transmit to you copies of the Convention in French and English as actually signed.

I have, &c.,

The Officer Administering the Government of New Zealand.

H. T. HOLLAND.

Enclosure.

Mr. EGERTON to the Marquis of SALISBURY.

MY LORD,—

Paris, 16th November, 1887.

I have the honour to transmith herewith to your Lordship the New Hebrides Convention, which, under the authority conveyed in your Lordship's Despatch No. 61, Treaty, of the 14th instant, I have this day signed with M. Flourens, in duplicate, one copy remaining in his Excellency's hands.

I have, &c.,

EDWIN H. EGERTON.

Sub-Enclosure.

CONVENTION relative to the NEW HEBRIDES, signed at Paris, 16th November, 1887.

THE Government of Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the Government of the French Republic, being desirous to abrogate the Declaration of the 19th June, 1847, relative to the islands leeward of Tahiti, and also to make provision for the future protection of life and property in the New Hebrides, have agreed upon the following articles:—

ARTICLE I.

The Government of Her Britannic Majesty consent to proceed to the abrogation of the Declaration of 1848 relative to the Islands to the leeward of Tahiti as soon as the agreement herein-after contained for the future protection of life and property in the New Hebrides by means of a Joint Commission shall have been carried out.

ARTICLE II.

A Joint Naval Commission shall be immediately constituted, composed of British and French naval officers on the Pacific station, charged with the duty of maintaining order and of protecting the lives and property of British subjects and French citizens in the New Hebrides.

ARTICLE III.

A Declaration to that effect shall be signed by the two Governments.

ARTICLE IV.

The regulations for the guidance of the Commission shall be drawn up by the two Governments, approved by them, and transmitted to the commanders of the British and French ships on the Pacific naval station within a period not exceeding four months from the date of the signature of the present Convention, should it be impossible to do so earlier.

ARTICLE V.

Immediately on the approval of those regulations by the two Governments, and the consequent withdrawal of the French military posts from the New Hebrides, the Government of Her Britannic Majesty will proceed to the abrogation of the Declaration of 1847. It is understood that the assurances relating to trade and to convicts, which are contained in the *note verbale* of the 24th October, 1884, communicated by M. de Freycinet to Lord Lyons, shall remain in full force.

In witness whereof the undersigned, duly authorised for that purpose, have signed the present Convention, and have affixed thereto their seals.

Done in duplicate at Paris, the 16th November, 1887.

(L.S.)

EDWIN HENRY EGERTON.

(L.S.)

FLOURENS.

No. 11.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

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

The yellow-books just issued by the French Government respecting the New Hebrides and Suez Canal Conventions form a curious contribution to the history of those diplomatic transactions. As regards the New Hebrides especially, a light is thrown upon the action of the French and English Foreign Offices which will be new to the public generally, though very little of it has not, for a long time past, been familiar to the New Zealand Government. I am preparing a *précis* on the subject, which may perhaps be of interest to you hereafter.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 24th December, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Sydney, 23rd December.

THE commander of Her Majesty's sailing schooner "Undine," which has arrived here from the Pacific, reports that the French commandant at the New Hebrides has received orders to evacuate the islands by the end of January. It is added that a French company is buying land from the natives and starting trading-stations.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 31st December, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 30th December.

THE *Matin* this morning publishes a letter from M. Etienne, formerly Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, to M. Deschanel, a Deputy, and author of a book entitled "French Interests in the Pacific." In this letter M. Etienne declares the application of a mixed *régime* in the New Hebrides to be impracticable, and describes a division of the archipelago between France and England as the only logical solution.

[Extract from the *Standard*, Wednesday, 4th January, 1888.]

THE FRENCH IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

(From our Correspondent.)

Paris, Tuesday night.

ALTHOUGH it may be hoped that the Convention of the 17th November respecting the New Hebrides and the islands to the west of Tahiti has removed the causes of difference between England and France, the yellow-book just issued by the French Foreign Office on the subject possesses a more than merely retrospective interest. An attentive perusal of the documents now published leaves on the mind the impression that the French Government has obtained far more considerable advantages than it has granted. By the abolition of the Declaration of 1847, formally recognising the independence of Raiatea and other islands west of Tahiti, France has secured a tangible gain. The yellow-book opens by giving the text of the Declaration of 1847, which was jointly drawn up in London on the 19th June of that year by Lord Palmerston and the French Ambassador, Count de Jarnac, and it is clear, from the perseverance with which successive Ministers of Foreign Affairs in France from 1880 to the present day have been trying to obtain the abolition of that Declaration, that they attached to it very considerable importance. The first despatch which has a direct bearing on the question is a telegram from M. de Freycinet to M. Waddington, dated the 22nd July, 1885. In this communication he says that in the course of a conversation, Lord Lyons having expressed apprehensions lest a fresh convoy of *récidivistes* should be sent to New Caledonia, he replied that there was no present intention of doing so; but that, with a view of allaying the apprehensions of the Australians, he had suggested an arrangement by which the French Government would undertake to discontinue the transportation of habitual criminals to that part of Oceania, provided England would allow France full liberty of action in the New Hebrides. Lord Lyons asked whether the Loyalty Islands would be included in that arrangement, to which M. de Freycinet answered in the affirmative. Six months later, in a telegram to M. Waddington, dated the 9th January, 1886, he repeated the suggestion:—

"It would be well to remind Lord Salisbury that the Government of the Republic continues inclined to enter into certain arrangements concerning the transportation of criminals to Oceania, provided it felt certain, thanks to the possession of the New Hebrides, of obtaining from those islands a supply of free labour to develop the resources of the principal French colonial establishment in the Pacific."

On the 30th April Lord Rosebery informed M. Waddington that the British Government could not entertain the proposal of the cession of the New Hebrides to France. In June a French force landed at the New Hebrides to protect the French residents there, some of whom had been killed by the natives. The French Government explained that the occupation was only temporary, and protracted the negotiations over a year, during which time the Convention with regard to the Newfoundland fisheries and the proposal for the abolition of the Declaration with regard to Raiatea and the other islands west of Tahiti were mixed up with the New Hebrides controversy. The whole course of the negotiations is clearly summed up in a despatch from Lord Salisbury to Mr. Egerton, dated the 21st October, 1887, which runs thus:—

"I enclose to you the draft of a Convention with respect to the New Hebrides, which is the result of the various communications and conversations that have passed upon the subject. The controversy has lasted longer than was anticipated, and has created some disquietude in the minds of Her Majesty's subjects in Australia, and I hope that by accepting the enclosed proposals the French Government may be able to bring it to a satisfactory termination. In the year 1878 the Marquis d'Harcourt, then French Ambassador at this Court, verbally assured Lord Derby that France entertained no intention of annexing the New Hebrides, and received from Lord Derby a corresponding assurance in return. When, in the beginning of last year, two of the islands of this group were occupied by a small French force, a general apprehension was created, especially among the colonists of Australia and New Zealand, that a policy was in contemplation not consistent with the assurances the Marquis d'Harcourt had been instructed to convey. The French Government have, however, constantly assured us in a categorical manner that they entertained no projects of annexation, and that they were prepared to remove their troops as soon as sufficient security was given to them that the lives and properties of French settlers upon the islands would be protected from attacks by the natives. The provisions of the draft Convention which is enclosed seem well calculated to effect the objects which both Governments desire; but the acceptance of it by Her Majesty's Government must be entirely conditional on an undertaking by the French Government that the evacuation shall not be postponed beyond a fixed date. The French Government are anxious that this opportunity shall be taken to release them from an engagement entered into in 1847, to the effect that they would not assume the protectorate of the Island of Raiatea, near Tahiti. The desirableness of acceding to this proposal, under certain conditions, has for several years been admitted by Her Majesty's Government. In the autumn of 1880 it was proposed to make this concession simultaneously with a Convention which was being negotiated for the settlement of the disputed fishery questions in Newfoundland. In view of the probability of this Convention being concluded, Lord Granville, in October, 1880, consented to a provisional French protectorate over the island for a strictly limited time. The agreement for that purpose was renewed at the end of six months, and since then has been renewed every six months up to the present time. The Newfoundland Convention, which was to have made the French protectorate of Raiatea definitive, was signed in October, 1885, but it contained a provision that it should not be ratified until it had been accepted by the Legislature of Newfoundland. Before it was signed it had been submitted to that colony, and in its ultimate form was not objected to by them. There was no ground to apprehend its final rejection after it had been signed. However, an objection, which proved in the judgment of the colony fatal, was taken to an article in it which gave to the French fishermen liberty to purchase bait in the colonial waters, and during the present year a Bill has passed the Legislature of Newfoundland, and has been approved, which is directly at variance with the stipulations as to the purchase of bait contained in the Convention. The result of this failure upon Raiatea has been that, contrary to all expectation, the French protectorate has never been made definitive. It does not, however, appear to Her Majesty's Government desirable, or indeed practicable, to remit to an aboriginal Administration an island which has been for seven years under French government; and on this account, as well as in view of the peculiar circumstances attending the failure of the Convention of 1885, they are willing to transfer the stipulation in question to the present Convention, subject, of course, to the undertaking given in a *note verbale* to Lord Lyons on the 24th October, 1885."

The French Government agreed to the proposal, and the Convention was accordingly signed in Paris on the 16th November last.

[Extract from the *Standard*, Thursday, 5th January, 1888.]

FRANCE AND ENGLAND.

(From our Correspondent.)

Paris, Wednesday night.

THE French Press, on the whole, are very well pleased with the yellow-books about the Suez Canal and the New Hebrides. The *Liberté* points out that it was "thanks to a false manœuvre on the part of British diplomacy that these two questions, at the outset quite distinct from each other and treated separately, were united and connected with each other. M. Flourens has had the merit of seizing the opportunity and turning this blunder to the best possible advantage." The *France* considers the arrangements come to as "a real success for French diplomacy, and an encouragement for the future." It points out that this success is due not to the French Ambassador in London, but to M. Flourens personally:—

"It may even be asked whether Embassies are indispensable, since no progress was made so long as the negotiations were carried on through their agency. It was sufficient for Lord Salisbury to come over to France and put himself in direct communication with M. Flourens, to dispel all misunderstanding, and enable France to obtain the satisfaction and guarantees which she claimed. Is it not strange that it should have been the Minister for Foreign Affairs who informed our Ambassador that the much-desired solution had been arrived at? This is a proof that the cleverest diplomacy is that which is carried on with frankness, clearness, and resolution. These qualities M. Flourens has shown himself to possess in an eminent degree."

The *Débats* points out that the real success of the negotiations was the abolition of the Declaration of 1847 guaranteeing the independence of the Tahiti Leeward Islands. It remarks that this is a real advantage obtained by M. Flourens, the more so that the promise to withdraw the French troops from the New Hebrides will only become valid after the constitution of a mixed Naval Commission for the protection of the French and British subjects in that archipelago. Until that Commission is organized the French are not bound to withdraw their troops.

On the other hand, the *Débats* points out that, although French diplomacy has obtained a success in the negotiations respecting the Suez Canal by debarring the Sultan and Khedive from

appealing to their allies in order to secure the neutrality of the Canal, yet that so long as England continues to occupy Egypt the Convention must remain inoperative. Nevertheless, according to the *Débats*, "The Convention is not useless, as it constitutes a ground for looking forward to the happy issue of future negotiations with England, and furnishes an additional argument for reminding the English that they cannot remain indefinitely on the banks of the Nile. But it is obvious that the Convention would be more valuable if it were immediately applicable, and if Perim were neutral ground."

The sum total is, that M. Flourens has added very materially to his prestige and his popularity by having gained a distinct advantage over England in his negotiations, and having given in exchange only a conditional promise to evacuate the New Hebrides. It may, however, be pointed out that the English negotiator took it for granted that, in exchange for his concessions, the French troops would be removed from the New Hebrides as a matter of course. This has not yet been done, and it remains to be seen what steps have been taken by the French Government to constitute the Commission, the creation of which alone can make the withdrawal of the French troops imperative. In French diplomatic circles it is currently reported that the French will remain in the New Hebrides so long as we remain in Egypt. This does not appear from any document published in the yellow-book; but I have some reason for believing that that is exactly what the French Government mean by establishing what they call a connection between two questions that have really no connection whatever. The presence of the French in the New Hebrides is a matter between England and France; our presence in Egypt is a European question; there is no analogy whatever between the two. The French have had troops in the New Hebrides since 1886. If the French negotiators are in earnest, and acting *bonâ fide*, as we must assume to be the case, by this time the French troops should be withdrawn. If they are kept there on the quibble that the Joint Commission has not been established, the Australian Colonies will have good reason to complain.

[Extract from the *Times*, Monday, 9th January, 1888.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES CONVENTION.

Paris, 7th January.

THE *note verbale* of the 24th October, 1885, which is referred to in the New Hebrides Convention, renews to the English Government the assurance that the Customs regulations to be established at Raiatea and the other Leeward Islands will be the same as exist at Tahiti. British subjects will therefore enjoy the same treatment as French subjects. The note also declares that there is no intention to depart, in respect of Raiatea and the other islands, from the decision not to send any convicts to the French possessions in the Society group.

No. 12.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 22nd February, 1888.

Enclosure to
No. 9.

I beg to enclose a parliamentary paper just issued, relating to the New Hebrides Convention, containing the declaration signed at Paris on the 26th January between the French and English Governments for constituting a Joint Naval Commission in the islands, and the regulations adopted for the guidance of that Commission.

I am preparing for you a report of a long interview I had at the beginning of this month with the Secretary of State in relation to these regulations, and other matters concerning the present position of affairs in the Western Pacific; but it may be some time before I am able to send it to you.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

ANNEX.—DECLARATION referred to in Articles I. and V. of the CONVENTION.

Declaration of the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and France, acknowledging the Independence of the Islands of Huahine, Raiatea, and Borabora, and of the small Islands adjacent thereto, signed at London, 19th June, 1847.

HER Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and His Majesty the King of the French, being desirous of removing a cause of discussion between their respective Governments relative to the islands in the Pacific Ocean which are hereinafter designated, have thought proper reciprocally to engage,—

1. Formally to acknowledge the independence of the Islands of Huahine, Raiatea, and Borabora (to the leeward of Tahiti), and of the small islands adjacent to and dependent upon those islands;

2. Never to take possession of the said islands, nor of any one or more of them, either absolutely or under the title of a protectorate, or in any other form whatever;

3. Never to acknowledge that a chief or prince reigning in Tahiti can at the same time reign in any one or more of the other islands above mentioned; nor, on the other hand, that a chief or prince reigning in any one or more of those other islands can reign at the same time in Tahiti; the reciprocal independence of the islands above mentioned, and of the Island of Tahiti and its dependencies, being established as a principle.

The undersigned, Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Minister Plenipotentiary of His Majesty the King of the French at the Court of London, being

furnished with the necessary powers, hereby declare, in consequence, that their said Majesties take reciprocally that engagement.

In witness whereof the undersigned have signed the present Declaration, and have affixed thereto the seals of their arms.

Done in duplicate at London, the 19th day of June, in the year of our Lord 1847.

(L.S.) PALMERSTON.
(L.S.) JARNAC.

DECLARATION signed at Paris, 26th January, 1888.

Declaration agreed upon between the Governments of Great Britain and France, pursuant to Article III. of the Convention of 18th November, 1887, relative to the New Hebrides.

1. A Joint Naval Commission shall be immediately constituted, composed of naval officers belonging to the British and French stations in the Pacific, charged with the duty of maintaining order, and of protecting the lives and property of British and French subjects in the New Hebrides.

2. The said Commission shall be composed of a President and two British and two French naval officers; the said officers to be named by any person having commission for that purpose from the British and French Governments respectively. From the date of the first composition of the Commission the President shall be in alternate months the commanding officer of the British and French naval forces respectively present in the group; it being decided by lot which of the two officers shall first act as President. The Commission shall assemble at the request of either commanding officer. In the absence of the President for the time being the other commanding officer shall preside, and the Commission shall have power to act if two other members be present, of whom one is British and the other French.

3. The Commission shall carry out its duties in conformity with the regulations annexed to this Declaration, and with any further regulations which may from time to time be agreed upon between the two Governments.

In witness whereof the undersigned, duly authorised by their respective Governments for that purpose, have signed the present Declaration, and have affixed thereto the seals of their arms.

Signed at Paris, in duplicate, this 26th day of January, 1888.

(L.S.) LYTTON.
(L.S.) FLOURENS.

ANNEX.—REGULATIONS for the Guidance of the JOINT NAVAL COMMISSION.

1. In the event of a disturbance of peace and good order in any part of the New Hebrides where British or French subjects may be settled, or in case of danger menacing the safety of life or property, the Commission shall forthwith assemble, and take such measures as it may think best under the circumstances for repressing the disturbance or for the protection of the interests endangered.

2. No British or French naval commander shall take independent or isolated action, except as hereinafter mentioned.

3. Military force shall not be resorted to unless the Commission shall consider its employment to be indispensable.

4. In the event of the landing of a naval or military force, such force shall not remain longer than may be considered necessary by the Commission.

5. Where the circumstances may not admit of any delay, and the urgency of the case may call for immediate action before the assembling of the Commission, the British and French commanders nearest the scene of action shall, in concert if possible, or separately if such concert be not practicable, take the necessary measures for the protection of the interests endangered, and shall report such action forthwith to their respective senior naval officers on the station, and await the further orders of the Commission. Each senior naval officer, on receiving such report, shall at once communicate it to the other.

6. The Commission shall have no further or other powers than are expressly delegated to it by these regulations, and shall not interfere in disputes concerning the title to land, or dispossession of their lands any persons, natives or foreigners.

Signed at Paris, in duplicate, this 26th day of January, 1888.

(L.S.) LYTTON.
(L.S.) FLOURENS.

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