

In the Conference of the Australasian Presbyterian Churches which met in Sydney in April of last year I pleaded for British annexation of the New Hebrides Islands, on account of eight reasons which I have written out to you and enclose, and which led to the six petitions being sent to the Queen, as above referred to, for annexation to Great Britain.

Thanking you heartily for the cordial reception of our deputation, and wishing you every blessing in Christ Jesus,

The Hon. James Service, Premier.

I remain, &c.,

JOHN G. PATON.

[I enclose this from Dr. Steel, Sydney.—JOHN G. PATON.]

SOME ten years ago, when an abortive effort was made by a number of private individuals to form a settlement in New Guinea, representations were made to some of the Colonial Governments on the importance of the annexation of New Guinea by the British Government. At the same period simultaneous efforts were made by Presbyterian Churches to the Governments of Australasian Colonies respecting the annexation of New Hebrides. The labour traffic at that time excited great interest on account of its many inhumanities. The Government of New South Wales, at the period referred to, formally agreed to recommend the annexation of New Guinea, the Duke of York Islands, New Britain, New Ireland, and the New Hebrides. Sir John Robinson, then Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, addressed a communication to the Earl of Kimberley, the British Minister for the Colonies, urging the importance of annexation. The answer of the Earl of Kimberley was unfavourable; but the correspondence which was published by the Government of New South Wales shows that this proposal is not now urged for the first time. The population of natives in the New Hebrides is rapidly declining, and these islands will certainly be annexed by some power, as they are well fitted to grow all kinds of tropical spices and other fruits. They were discovered for the most part by British navigators, traded with by British vessels, regularly visited by Her Majesty's ships of war, and justice frequently administered by Her Majesty's naval officers, and finally evangelised by the labours and munificence of British subjects.

No. 2.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 17th September, 1889.

Co-OPERATE with Victoria at Colonial Office respecting possible annexation New Hebrides by France, or settlement there of liberated convicts from Noumea.

H. A. ATKINSON.

No. 3.

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

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 17th September, 1889.

YOUR letter 29th August re New Hebrides. Have wired Agent-General to co-operate with you at Colonial Office.

H. A. ATKINSON.

No. 4.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 17th September, 1889.

I have received to-day your telegram directing me to co-operate with the Victorian authorities at the Colonial Office with regard to any possible annexation of the New Hebrides by France, or the settlement there of liberated convicts from New Caledonia.

There is not the least danger of France annexing the islands, for such a step would be in open contravention of the recent agreement between the French and English Governments, so that on that point you may rest assured. On the other hand, as to *libérés* from New Caledonia going to the islands, I have always felt there was a very great risk; nor is it clear how they can be prevented doing so. At any rate, I am very certain that after all that has happened on the New Hebrides question, the Foreign Office will, on its part, do nothing whatever that is not strictly within the mutual engagements between France and England which are embodied in the agreement.

But as soon as I know what the Victorian Government has directed Sir Graham Berry to do in the matter I will, of course, do all I can, as you desire, to support the action he may take.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

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