

1890.

## NEW ZEALAND.

PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF NEW HEBRIDES BY  
FRANCE.

(PAPERS RELATING THERETO.)

[In continuation of A.—3, 1889.]

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

## No. 1.

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

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Melbourne, 29th August, 1889.

I have the honour to forward herewith, for your information, a copy of a memorandum which I have addressed to His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, together with copies of the documents referred to therein, relative to the present position of affairs in the New Hebrides.

His Excellency has communicated the substance of this memorandum by telegraph to the Admiral Commanding on the Australian Station, and as soon as a reply is received from Admiral Fairfax it is intended to telegraph to the Imperial Government on the subject.

I have, &amp;c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington, New Zealand.

D. GILLIES, Premier.

## Enclosure.

## MEMORANDUM for His Excellency the ADMINISTRATOR of the GOVERNMENT.

MR. GILLIES has the honour to lay before your Excellency a copy of a letter which he has received from the Rev. A. Hardie, Convener of the Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church, dated the 22nd August, in which it is stated that liberated convicts from Noumea are being taken to the New Hebrides and settled there; also that these men are permitted to trade in strong drink, ammunition, and firearms, which British subjects are prohibited from doing.

Your Excellency is aware that the French occupation of the New Hebrides has heretofore been successfully resisted, but far worse than French occupation *per se* is the prospect of those islands being overrun by convicts, either of French or any other nationality.

In addition to Mr. Hardie's letter, there appears in the papers of the 26th instant a most important column of news respecting the New Hebrides, to which Mr. Gillies would ask your Excellency's serious attention.

It is stated that a petition from traders at the New Hebrides has been presented to the Governor of New Caledonia praying for the annexation of the New Hebrides by France, and that the Governor is described as having returned "a cautious but satisfactory reply, assuring the deputation that the petition would receive the utmost consideration."

Your Excellency is aware that this colony is resting on the assurance of the French Government, communicated through Her Majesty's Government, that it entertains no projects of annexation.\* But the alleged reply of the Governor of New Caledonia appears inconsistent with the assurances which have been given by the Government of France.

Mr. Gillies begs that your Excellency will be so good as to represent to Her Majesty's Government the anxiety which is felt here as to the fate of the New Hebrides, and that nothing less than the utmost vigilance and firmness on the part of the Imperial authorities can avert the calamity of these islands becoming part of the convict system of France.

As an offset to the petition which has been stated to have been presented to the Governor of New Caledonia, Mr. Gillies would recall attention to the numerous petitions which have been presented to Her Majesty's Government for the annexation of the islands to Great Britain.

A list of these is embodied in a letter from the Rev. J. G. Paton, dated the 8th June, 1883 (copy enclosed herewith).

Premier's Office, Melbourne, 27th August, 1889.

D. GILLIES, Premier.

\* See letter of Marquis of Salisbury to the Secretary of the British Legation in Paris, dated 21st October, 1887. (A.—4, 1888, No. 9.)