

Earl Granville to Mr. Plunkett.

SIR,—

Foreign Office, 25th August, 1883.

I communicated in due course to the Colonial Office Lord Lyons's despatch, of the 9th of May last, in which his Excellency reported that the "Transportation of Relapsed Criminals" Bill had passed the first reading in the French Chamber of Deputies, and that New Caledonia and its dependencies were included amongst the settlements to which relapsed criminals are to be sent.

The Earl of Derby has now brought under my notice, in connection with this matter, a joint communication, which has been addressed to his Lordship by the Agents-General of New South Wales, New Zealand, Queensland, and Victoria, and in which, *inter alia*, very strong representations are made with a view to the adoption of effective measures for preventing the serious consequences to be anticipated from the above-mentioned resolution of the French Government, by which large numbers of the worst class of criminals would be transported to New Caledonia, where, as it is stated, they would be free.

And, with further reference to this subject, his Lordship has received from the Agent-General of Queensland a letter, of which copy is also enclosed for your information, and which forwards a telegram from the Premier of the colony, calling attention to the refusal of the French authorities of New Caledonia to apply for the extradition of criminals who escape from Noumea to Queensland.

It is clear that this question, being one which gravely concerns the welfare of the Australian Colonies, must command the prompt attention of Her Majesty's Government, and I have accordingly to request that you will lose no time in placing yourself in communication with the French Government upon the subject, with a view to ascertain what is the course which they propose to pursue, in the first place, as regards the number of convicts to be sent out to the Western Pacific, and as to the position of such criminals after arrival; and, secondly, with respect to the failure of the Government of New Caledonia to demand the extradition of criminals whom they have permitted to escape in the cases pointed out in the above-mentioned telegram from the Queensland Government.

I have, &c.,
GRANVILLE.

The Colonial Office to the Foreign Office.

SIR,—

Downing Street, 10th August, 1883.

I am directed by the Earl of Derby to transmit to you, to be laid before Earl Granville, a copy of a letter from the Agent-General for Queensland, forwarding a telegram from the Premier of the colony, in which he desires that the attention of Her Majesty's Government may be called to the refusal of the French authorities in New Caledonia to apply for the extradition of criminals who have escaped from Noumea.

2. In connection with this matter, I am to request Earl Granville's early consideration of the enclosed copy of a joint letter from the Agents-General of New South Wales, New Zealand, Queensland, and Victoria, on the subject of New Guinea and the New Hebrides, in which it is strongly urged that measures should be taken to prevent the consequences anticipated from the declared intention of the French Government to transport large numbers of the worst class of criminals to New Caledonia, where they would be free on arrival.

3. Considering the grave importance of this question to the welfare of the Australian Colonies, it appears to Lord Derby to be necessary to obtain immediate explanations from the French Government as to the course contemplated (1) in regard to the number of convicts proposed to be sent out and their position after arrival, and (2) the failure of the Government of New Caledonia in the cases just reported to demand the extradition of criminals whom they have permitted to escape; and Lord Derby will be glad to be enabled to assure the Government of Queensland that Her Majesty's Government has not failed to give prompt attention to the serious representation which has been made to them, and has communicated with the French Government.

4. I am also to request that Lord Granville may be reminded that in 1881 the Queensland Legislature passed a Bill to prevent the influx of foreign and other criminals into the colony, which was the subject of correspondence between this department and the Foreign Office. This Bill did not at that time receive Her Majesty's assent, as objection was taken to the unequal incidence of certain of its provisions; but under the circumstances now reported, and having regard to the contemplated increase in the number of French convicts to be transported to the Western Pacific, it appears to Lord Derby that it will not be possible to continue to resist such legislation.

I am, &c.,
R. H. MEADE.

The Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office.

Mr. Plunkett to Earl Granville.

(No. 563.)

MY LORD,—

Paris, 31st August, 1883.

On the receipt of your Lordship's Despatch No. 820, of the 25th instant, I drew up the memo. copy of which I have the honour to enclose, explanatory of the anxiety felt in the Australian Colonies as to the serious consequences which the proposed French law for the "transportation of relapsed criminals" to New Caledonia may entail.

My intention was to speak to M. Challemel-Lacour in the sense of your Lordship's instructions, and to leave the memo. with his Excellency only as a semi-official document.

I found, however, on calling at the Foreign Department this afternoon, that M. Challemel-Lacour, who has been in poor health for some days past, has suddenly become so much worse that he is about to proceed at once to Vichy, and at that moment he was in conference with the Presi-