

7. I now come to the question of the Tonga Islands. They are at present in a very anomalous position. The King is an aged man, and if his death were to occur the probabilities are that there would be trouble as to his successor. I do not mean to enter into the dispute that has taken place between the present Premier of Tonga, the Rev. Shirley Baker, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church. That has been, and is still, a bitter controversy. It has divided the islands into two parties, those who remain with the Wesleyan Church and those who belong to what is termed the Free Church—practically the Church under the authority of Mr. Baker. It seems to me, however, that, in the presence of the complications that are sure to arise in Tonga, the Imperial Government ought to have stationed in the islands a Consul or Vice-Consul of judgment, and of great experience and ability; and that it should be an instruction to the admiral on the station to send frequently a man-of-war to visit the Friendly Islands as well as the Navigator group. This would tend not only to maintain the prestige of Britain, but would be a guarantee that, in the event of any trouble, British interests would be carefully guarded. I believe that the feeling in Tonga, if ascertained, would be the same as it is in Samoa—that their islands also should be placed under British dominion. So long, however, as the present King rules and Mr. Baker is Premier, this feeling will not be given expression to; but in the event of the King's death I feel sure that, if there is not a civil war, there will be a request to the British Government to afford some protection to the islands.

No. 19.

8. I have referred in a former letter to the arrival here of the Queen of Rarotonga and to the Cook or Hervey group. With this group, as you are aware, and as I have stated, New Zealand has a great trade, and the islands have been partially civilized through the efforts of the London Missionary Society. These islands also require the attention of the British Government, and would, I believe, gladly accept annexation.

9. You will see from what I have stated that in my opinion the Imperial Government should pay more attention to the Pacific question than has been hitherto the case. It is hardly necessary that I should refer to the history of what has occurred in the past; but if in Lord Palmerston's time the request of Queen Pomare had been acceded to, the extensive and important group known as the Society Islands, the Austral Islands, and the Tuamotu and Marquesas, would all have been British instead of French possessions. This would have been better for English trade and better for the natives of those groups. The question now is, Is the Imperial Government to allow the islands that ask annexation to fall into other hands, or is the request of the islanders and the colonists to be heeded?

I feel sure that you will strongly urge the Colonial Office to take decided action. Should it fail to do so, both the colonists and the islanders will feel much aggrieved.

Sir F. Dillon Bell, K.C.M.G., Agent-General.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 34.

The PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

We protest against ceding Raiatea to France unless Rapa given us.
26th January, 1886.

ROBERT STOUT.

No. 35.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 27th January, 1886.

No. 28.

Nos. 22 and 23.

Nos. 31 and 34.

Since writing to you on the 15th instant (No. 41) I have received your two despatches—of the 27th November and 1st December—relating to the Pacific Islands question, and also your telegrams of the 21st and 26th, relating to the Samoan chiefs and Raiatea.

I had already seen at the Colonial Office the telegrams which His Excellency the Governor had sent to the Secretary of State in reference to Samoa, and the Agent-General for Victoria had been good enough to show me a telegram he had received from the Premier of that colony on the same subject.

I understood that the Secretary of State was to have sent His Excellency a reply to his telegrams to-day; but the defeat of the Ministry last night may have prevented it. I sent you a telegram myself, however, on the 21st, to the effect that nothing would really be done of what you wished about Samoa, and that the only thing to be depended upon was that neither England nor Germany would annex the group.

No. 32.

I believe you will find the true key to what has happened in the *communiqué* entitled "The Foreign Office under Lord Salisbury," which appeared in the *Times* a few days ago, a copy of which is enclosed. When Lord Salisbury went to the Foreign Office many questions of great perplexity and importance were still pending with foreign Powers; and it was the greatest of the Minister's objects to close all these questions, in order to bring about a complete concert of Europe upon the Eastern question. For this purpose it was essential, among other things, not to have a misunderstanding with either Germany or France about the respective spheres of those countries and England in the Pacific. As to Germany, it was agreed that Samoa was not to be taken possession of by either that country or England; as to France, the long-pending dispute about the Newfoundland fisheries (which I have so frequently mentioned) was to be settled by giving up Raiatea; for ever since the German acquisitions in New Guinea and the adjacent islands there has never been the least chance of France giving us Rapa in exchange.