

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