

wished to take side by side with this matter the negotiations in regard to the Suez Canal which were some time ago in progress. We have no objection to this, but we must demur to these latter negotiations being the cause of any delay in regard to the former.

The Earl of ROSEBURY.—Has any communication been received from the French Government since May last, when the noble Marquis informed us that he expected to receive one?

The Marquis of SALISBURY.—Yes, one communication of a very inconclusive character.

[Extracts from the *Times*, Wednesday, 10th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES QUESTION.

Paris, 9th August.

THE journal *Paris* this evening states that the British Chargé d'Affaires yesterday requested M. Flourens, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to name a date for the French evacuation of the New Hebrides.

M. Flourens replied that he could not give a precise answer so long as England did not make known her intentions regarding Egypt and the neutralisation of the Suez Canal.

M. Flourens leaves Paris this evening for a three weeks' stay at La Bourboule.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

MR. BRYCE asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, in the negotiations now proceeding for the evacuation by France of the New Hebrides, the French Government had endeavoured to associate that question with questions relating to the Suez Canal and to the future of Egypt; whether Her Majesty's Government would continue to press for an immediate and separate solution of the New Hebrides questions, and would insist on the view that the former question should be forthwith disposed of, without waiting for the settlement of the more debatable matters which related to the Suez Canal and Egypt; whether any habitual criminals had lately been sent from France to any of the French colonies in the Pacific; and whether it was the fact that settlers from France continued to establish themselves in the New Hebrides.

SIR J. FERGUSON.—The French Government have desired that the negotiations in regard to the New Hebrides and the Suez Canal should proceed *pari passu*, but have not sought to associate the former with questions relating to Egypt generally. Her Majesty's Government, while not objecting to discuss the two subjects at the same time, have in no way consented that the withdrawal of the French troops from the New Hebrides should be postponed until an agreement had been arrived at for the neutralisation of the Suez Canal. Her Majesty's Government are pressing upon the French Government that the negotiations should be brought to a close in respect to this subject, upon which the two Governments are perfectly agreed in principle. No shipment of habitual criminals to New Caledonia has lately been reported. The last of which we have any knowledge took place in November last. It is the fact that settlers continue to be sent from France to the New Hebrides.

MR. BRYCE said that he would call attention to that subject on the Diplomatic Vote.

No. 5.

THE AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 26th August, 1887.

Since my letter of the 10th instant, No. 1209, the New Hebrides question has been again No. 4. before both Houses of the Imperial Parliament.

Lord Rosebery had given notice to call attention to it in the House of Lords on the 11th instant; but Lord Salisbury said that serious public inconvenience would result from discussing it at all, and Lord Rosebery withdrew his notice.

On the 22nd Mr. Labouchere asked in the House of Commons what steps had been taken with regard to the French colonists sent out to the islands since the French occupation; to which Sir James Fergusson (Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) simply replied that there was nothing in the agreement between the British and French Governments providing that the subjects of neither Power should settle in the group.

On the 23rd, the Diplomatic Vote being under consideration, Mr. Bryce (Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Mr. Gladstone's Government) called attention to the continued French occupation, and gave a brief history of the successive events that had taken place, but concluded with the usual assurance that he did not wish to interfere with any negotiations that were going on. Sir James Fergusson replied, defending the course pursued by the Government; and pointed out that other countries, having a sense of power and desire for expansion, were anxious to occupy the unsettled lands of the world, and that due consideration must be given to such feelings; adding that the subject of the colonisation of the New Hebrides had formed no part of the agreement [of 1878-82] between England and France, and that Her Majesty's Government would be going absolutely beyond their rights if they objected to it. With regard to what Mr. Bryce had said against the Egyptian and New Hebrides questions being mixed up together, Sir James Fergusson repeated what Lord Salisbury had said in the House of Lords, to the effect that Her Majesty's Government had not objected to discuss the two questions at the same time, but had always refused to admit there was any connection between them.

Mr. John Higginson, the chief promoter of the French companies now at work in the islands, has written a long letter to Sir Charles Dilke, stating the case from the French point of view.

I annex a number of extracts from newspapers, and reports of what passed in the Houses. One of these, you will see, contains a report which came to a Paris newspaper to the effect that the English and French Governments had "come to an understanding over the New Hebrides"