

Comte de Jarnac, the two Governments had reciprocally engaged "never to take possession of in any form whatever." The proceeding of the French authorities of Tahiti was discussed by the French Government, but it was admitted by the then Foreign Secretary that France had seized the opportunity to open negotiations for the abrogation of the 1847 Treaty in consideration of adequate concessions on our part "in connection with other pending questions." It would seem, therefore, that an attempt is now being made on the part of France to adopt similar tactics in regard to the New Hebrides to those employed with so much success by that country in the matter of Raiatea, and, although the result in the two cases can scarcely be the same, we demur to any proceedings that would give rise to a possibility of increased delay in the withdrawal of the French troops from the New Hebrides. Let us for a moment glance at the two questions which France would wish to take "side by side." First we will take the position of affairs in the New Hebrides. Briefly it is this: In order to protect the uninvestigated rights of a French trading company, the French Government sanctioned the landing of troops in these islands, the independence of which, in 1878, France and England reciprocally agreed to respect; an engagement that was renewed by Comte d'Aunay, the French Chargé d'Affaires, on the part of France, by the *note verbale* of the 9th of July, 1883, and publicly referred to the following night by Lord Granville in the House of Lords.

More than a year has passed since the French troops took up their quarters in these islands, and, in spite of remonstrances from Her Majesty's Government, no action on the part of the French Government has yet taken place with regard to their withdrawal. There they still remain, in spite of diplomatic negotiations and in face of the 1878 understanding. At length a definite reply is given by France to this country, to the effect that when the negotiations with regard to the Suez Canal are settled, then the withdrawal of the troops from the New Hebrides will be considered. Now, what are these negotiations? Firstly, there is the question of widening the canal. This, however, has been decided upon, so negotiations in that respect are already at an end. Secondly, we have the subject of neutralisation, but this is hardly a matter that concerns France and England alone. The nations have a voice in the settlement of the passage of war-ships at all times through this highway to the East, and their wishes can hardly be regulated by the negotiations between France and this country. The neutralisation question may therefore be dismissed as not having any serious bearing on the withdrawal of the French troops from the New Hebrides. Lastly, there are many little matters "in regard to the Suez Canal" which are in dispute between the French and English representatives on the Board of Directors, and will take some time to arrange, seeing it would be absurd to suppose that the French troops are to be allowed to remain in possession of independent islands until every detail in connection with the rival claims of the two countries in respect of the Canal management is amicably arranged. From the comparison of the two problems before us we fail to see that the solution of the one will in any way facilitate the solution of the other; and we would urge upon Her Majesty's Government the necessity of avoiding, as far as possible, any acquiescence in the wish of France to take the two matters "side by side."

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 20th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 19th August.

MR. JOHN HIGGINSON, of New Caledonia, who, I believe, is American by birth and French by naturalisation, publishes in the *Temps* a long letter on the New Hebrides. He argues that, although in 1853 the French Government neglected to hoist its flag on the islands, it regarded them as a dependency of New Caledonia, and styled the first Governor of the latter "Gouverneur de la Nouvelle Calédonie et Dépendances." Dismissing as inexplicable the Anglo-French Convention of 1878, he maintains that since 1882 the English has been almost absorbed by the French element, 700,000 acres of land having been formally transferred from English to French colonists, while nearly a million acres have been purchased from the native chiefs. He justifies the landing of French troops, by which the Europeans were saved from massacre and cannibalism, unbroken tranquillity being maintained for twelve months. He charges the English missionaries with inculcating hatred of Frenchmen, and with keeping up a fictitious agitation in Australia against French annexation.

Mr. Higginson hints that France might allay Australian uneasiness by promising not to make the islands a penal settlement; and after urging the danger of a dual rule, and the difficulty of a division of territory, he advocates that England should assume a protectorate over the Banks and Santa Cruz, while France should annex the New Hebrides, and engage to put a stop to the system of transportation to the South Seas.

[Extract from the *Times*, Tuesday, 23rd August, 1887.]

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

MR. LABOUCHERE asked what action Her Majesty's Government had taken with regard to the French colonists that had been sent out to the New Hebrides since the French troops had been in occupation.

SIR J. FERGUSSON.—There is nothing in the agreement between the British and French Governments that the subjects of neither Power shall settle in the New Hebrides.

[Extract from the *Times*, Wednesday, 24th August, 1887.]

The Committee then resumed the consideration of the Diplomatic Vote (£234,524 for Her Majesty's Embassies and Missions abroad), which was begun on Saturday.

Mr. BRYCE regretted that on Saturday the Government had not given the House a little more information as to the course which it was intended to pursue in the next six months. . . .