

same state of things was being reproduced in the Western Pacific, where Australian interests mainly lay. (Hear, hear.) There was the great French colony of New Caledonia, which was peopled by convicts. Then there were the Loyalty Islands, and if the New Hebrides were to be placed under French jurisdiction then there would be a stretch of the intervening islands between Australia and Fiji all under the French flag. However we in this country might regard this, the people of Australia could not regard the prospect without considerable anxiety. He could not say exactly what were our precise relations with other countries with which we came into contact in the Pacific. No one who was not in office could exactly tell. But he had no reason to believe these relations were otherwise than satisfactory. About three years ago their Lordships might remember that an important agreement was come to between this country and Germany, by which the two Governments agreed to delimit their jurisdiction—their spheres of influence, it would be more correct to say—in the South Pacific. The result of this had been that so far as Germany was concerned the chances of friction had been very much lessened. He would throw out for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government the suggestion whether some such understanding might not be arrived at with France. (Hear, hear.) The noble Earl pointed out strong reasons why this matter should be satisfactorily settled without delay. There were two special reasons for this. It was a question that closely affected the natives of the South Pacific. He, about 1876 and 1877, was the author of two Acts which created the office of High Commissioner, with jurisdiction to deal with all cases of outrages on natives, especially such as arose out of the labour traffic. Those Acts had done great good, but they had not altogether attained their object. It was not possible for the British Government to give the High Commissioner jurisdiction over foreigners or natives in any but British islands. It would be well if some system of co-operation or joint action could be arranged. There used to be a mixed slave-trade Court which worked very well in the slave-trade days. There was another reason which rendered the settlement of the matter urgent—namely, the *récidiviste* question in New Caledonia. That was a very large and important question, and one that had moved the Australian public mind to its lowest depths. (Hear, hear.) Until this question of the New Hebrides, with which it was connected, should have been settled it would remain, he feared, a burning question, containing in itself the germs of future trouble and anxiety. (Hear, hear.)

Earl GRANVILLE.—I rise to express my gratification that, being in office, the noble Marquis seems to think that there is some weight in the principle which I laid down that an answer should not be hastily given without notice to questions relating to important foreign affairs. There is still this difference between us, however: When I laid down that principle I adhered to it, and did not answer questions until after notice, whereas the noble Marquis, after enunciating the principle, has really told us how the matter stands to which the question put to him refers. There is certainly no one more anxious than I am to avoid causing any feelings of unnecessary excitement between our great neighbours the French and ourselves. (Hear, hear.) The proof of this is that when we first received the news of the landing of French troops, and considered the advisability of sending immediately ships of war to the scene, we determined it was better not to do so. A short time afterwards, however, we agreed that it was desirable to send British ships, not as a menace or in any spirit of hostility, but in order to put the two countries on the same footing. Since then, as far as I know, the occupation has been consistently discountenanced by the French Government, who have always given us assurances that they do not approve the occupation of the New Hebrides, and that they intend to adhere to the international agreement. Last year the noble Earl near me repeated that assurance, which he had recently received from the French Government. But now that this French occupation of the shore has gone on, not only for weeks and months, but for more than a year, a change in our policy and a reversal of the order that ships shall be on the spot may exercise an unfavourable impression, especially on the colonial mind. In conclusion, let me say that no one can desire more heartily than myself that the communications between the Governments may lead to a really satisfactory result for the French nation, ourselves, and our colonial fellow-subjects. (Cheers.)

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THOUGH the official reports of the meetings of the Colonial Conference are confined to a formal record of the proceedings, it is no secret that the Conference has so far proved a conspicuous success and has already achieved substantial results. For this the credit must be divided between the members of Her Majesty's Government, especially Sir Henry Holland, whose courtesy and capacity have won golden opinions from the Colonial Delegates, and the Colonial Delegates themselves, to whose statesmanlike attitude Lord George Hamilton paid a merited tribute on Saturday at the Royal Academy banquet. The First Lord of the Admiralty also took advantage of the same occasion to give some account of one of the chief results achieved by the Conference in relation to his own department. The colonies have been invited to join the Mother-country in a species of naval partnership, and they have readily responded to the invitation, with the result that a scheme has been matured—subject to the approval of the Parliaments of the colonies concerned—which will place one-fourth of Her Majesty's colonies and the Mother-country in a very different position from that which they have hitherto occupied so far as naval defences are concerned. The arrangement, said Lord George Hamilton, will make a substantial addition to the effective strength of the fleet, and will bring the Australasian Colonies into financial partnership with the Mother-country in supporting the cost of the Imperial Navy. Other questions of equal moment to the several colonies have been and will be discussed, and in general it may be affirmed that, so far as they have been settled, it has been found possible to reach conclusions acceptable to all parties concerned. It is not easy to overrate the importance of discussions of this kind, not merely for the positive results which they achieve, but for the spirit of friendly co-operation which they engender. "It was certain," said Lord Rosebery on Friday, "that when the leading representatives of the colonies