

in the coins of small value, and the drawing-up of a Bill to ratify the same, which will be voted by the Chamber on its meeting. This will put several millions into the pockets of M. Higginson and his co-directors, and will certainly not be prejudicial to those who, in an official capacity, have supported him.

The coincidence of the nickel coinage and the evacuation of Egypt by the English in M. Flourens's witty despatch is easy to explain. In the French governmental mind one is as important as the other, and one may be used to bear upon the other; but the powers in Downing Street would do well to look into this *question connexe*, as they call it in Paris. It is not, to use Campbell's words, with "Nelson and the Nile" that we have to do; but it is a question of "Nickel and the Nile" with Messrs. Rouvier, Flourens, Higginson, *et Cie.*, in the matter of the New Hebrides.

No. 6.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London. S.W., 16th September, 1887.

Nothing further of a definite kind has happened about the New Hebrides. At the end of August, a Press telegram came from Melbourne that the French were trespassing on the Mission lands, and protests thereon from the Government of Victoria were duly made to the Colonial Office by Sir Graham Berry. The French Press keeps repeating that France will give no satisfaction to England about the islands until England accedes to her demands about the Suez Canal. The differences on that question are said to be getting nearer to a settlement, and some of the French journals are consequently preparing their readers for an early evacuation. The *Journal des Débats* a few days ago said, "There is a mutual engagement between the two countries not to annex the New Hebrides, and France has never thought of contesting or denying that engagement; but, as the Australian Colonies attach so much importance to our evacuating the islands, we can without much inconvenience withdraw our troops, so long as precautions are taken that our departure shall not be the signal for a massacre of our people." At the same time, I would recommend you not to rely much, for the present, on assurances such as you will find in the accompanying extracts, to the effect that the differences between England and France on Egyptian questions are being settled. The concurrence of the great Powers is necessary for any settlement, and this does not seem to be much nearer than it has been for a long time.

In the meanwhile, the French Government have ordered the Governor of New Caledonia to report upon the present relations between the natives and the colonists, and the measures to be taken for the safety of the latter. It remains to be seen whether any "colonists" are left. The *Times* lately published a letter from its correspondent at Noumea, saying that out of all the free immigrants brought out by the French New Hebrides Company only eight remained, the rest having either died of fever or drifted back to starve in the penal settlement.

Nevertheless, Mr. Higginson told me the other day that his company were buying up every land-claim they could in the group. Presently the same thing will happen there as at Samoa, where the acreage claimed by the German, English, and American speculators far exceeds the whole area of the Navigators Group.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 27th August, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Melbourne, 26th August.

INTELLIGENCE has been received here that trespasses have been committed by the French New Hebrides Company against the Presbyterian Missions in those islands. This news has caused a fresh outburst of feeling here, and the Victorian Government has accordingly requested Sir Graham Berry, the Agent-General in London, to bring the matter before the Home Government, and to strongly urge them to see that Australian interests are maintained in the New Hebrides.

Paris, 26th August.

There is no foundation for the statement published in the journal *Le Pays* that an understanding had been arrived at between the British and French Governments with regard to the New Hebrides. Neither have any terms been recently proposed by the French Government. It is thought that the Australians have attached more importance to the question than is justifiable in the circumstances, but it is hoped that some arrangement may yet be come to which will be acceptable to all parties concerned.

[Extract from the *Times*, Monday, 5th September, 1887.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

SIR,—

To the Editor of the *Times*.

I presume the subjoined communication, received by me to-day, is intended as an answer to my statement of colonial opinion on the New Hebrides question in the *Times* of Thursday:—

"London, 27th August.

"SIR,—No sensible man will believe that the Australians are afraid of the invasion of French convicts from New Caledonia.