

"If it were so they have a very simple remedy. Instead of annoying Her Majesty's Ministers and creating international difficulties the Australians should require passports and certificates of respectability from every person landing on their shores, and enact that every convict shall be flogged and sent back to the French settlement.

"Why should the French be blamed for imitating the English in their experiment, which has been so successful, and has been the origin of our rich colonies at the antipodes?"

"The plan of sending convicts to a colony, of granting them land and giving them the chance of reforming, at the same time of never allowing them to return to Europe, is certainly better and more moral than the English system of keeping the convicts at Home and turning them out into society again after a few years, more corrupt, destitute, and desperate.

"Are the Australians jealous of the French colony? Some foolish men are so perhaps, but every intelligent merchant will understand that the Australian ports cannot but gain by the intercourse with a young and rising colony.

"The real motive of the wild complaints of the Australians is simply this: They wish to keep away from the Pacific Islands all European nations because they want to preserve them for their own use as a vast field from which they recruit labourers. This is disguised slave trade, which should be prohibited by philanthropic England.

"There is no lack of industrious Chinese, but the Chinaman does not submit to the treatment which is inflicted on the poor, helpless, ignorant islander.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

"A. MAQUET."

Taking these allegations *seriatim*, permit me to say,—

1. There is a broad distinction between fear and annoyance. No man is afraid of a mosquito *per se*, but, for all that, a constant succession of mosquito attacks is calculated to cause considerable unpleasantness and to induce a heartfelt wish that these troublesome insects were thousands of miles away instead of being so inconveniently close at hand. The French convicts are the mosquitoes of the Pacific, and the Australian colonists are the people entitled to general sympathy in consequence of their proximity to the pests.

2. The remedy proposed is by no means so simple as the writer supposes. A glance at the map of Australia will show that the Colony of Queensland—the nearest of the colonies to the French penal settlements in the Pacific—presents a coast-line of 2,550 miles—a distance so enormous as to preclude the possibility of its being adequately guarded by a colonial police force. Nothing but an elaborate and expensive system of military patrolling would meet the requirements of the case. It is very easy to say, "Flog your captured French convict and send him back;" but you have to catch him first. The experience of the past proves pretty conclusively that for the one French criminal caught on landing in Queensland ten at the very least succeed in eluding the vigilance of the police and mix with the general population. Their true character only becomes known when they recommence a career of crime, are reconvicted, and reimprisoned in the colonies. They have been known to work their way southwards from Queensland to Sydney and Melbourne, and many of them have been caught in these cities with the implements of crime in their possession. On being convicted and sentenced by the colonial Courts they have almost invariably confessed that New Caledonia was their latest place of residence. Latterly we have not heard so frequently of the landing of French convicts on the Queensland coast; but it is not so long since telegrams from local correspondents notifying the capture of another boatload of escaped French felons were quite a familiar feature in the colonial newspapers. The incident was, in fact, of such frequent occurrence that the belief became widespread that these successive and successful escapes could not possibly have been effected without the direct or the indirect connivance of the New Caledonian authorities. It is to prevent a renewal of this intolerable state of things and to save their shores from any more of this foreign pollution that the Australian colonists are so determined not to allow the New Hebrides to fall into the hands of the French. As for the suggestion that the evil could be met by "the Australians requiring passports and certificates of respectability from every person landing on their shores," why should the inoffensive many be put to the trouble of procuring these documents, when all that is necessary is that France should either keep her worst malefactors at home, or else guard them securely in New Caledonia, and prevent their becoming a nuisance and a peril to the British colonies in the immediate vicinity?

3. This statement is untrue, but the fallacy it contains is very prevalent. A great many people fancy that there is a direct connection between the English penal settlements in Australia and the present wealth and prosperity of the colonies. Such is not the case. It was the discovery of gold in 1851 by free men and the consequent immense influx of free-born immigrants, principally from the British Islands, that made the Australian Colonies what they are to-day. Convict Australia was submerged and blotted out by that tidal wave of adventurous population.

4. History does not bear out this assertion, though as a theory it commends itself on humanitarian grounds. But in actual practice it has been but too frequently found that remote penal settlements degenerate into theatres of shocking vice and moral degradation. (See report of a Committee of the House of Commons on transportation, 1838, and a report on the same subject by a Committee of the House of Lords, 1847.) The best mode of dealing with criminals will probably be a debatable subject for all time; but this much is certain: that no nation is justified in so acting that neighbouring friendly States are compelled, for their own protection, to maintain a large contingent of that nation's criminals. The number of French felons who are now in Australian prisons, and who ought legally to be in New Caledonia, would constitute a very interesting and instructive return.

5. The idea of any section of Australians being jealous of a French colony in the Pacific is ludicrously absurd. As for the Australian ports gaining by intercourse with a new foreign community in Australian waters, that somewhat mercenary consideration, I am aware, has influenced some Sydney politicians and caused them to run counter to the almost universal Australian sentiment on