

the New Hebrides is based on the evacuation of the islands by France as a preliminary condition. The colonisation of the group will be open to all nations, but each Government will have to watch over the security of its own subjects. The French Government is already taking measures for the protection of the French colony after the evacuation.

No. 7.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 21st October, 1887.

I beg to enclose an extract from a speech by Lord Rosebery yesterday, referring to the continued occupation of the New Hebrides by French troops. I also enclose a letter containing some interesting information from a correspondent of the *Times* in those islands; and an article in last week's *Spectator*, advocating an English military occupation by a force of equal strength to the French.

In the "Atlas Universel," just published in Paris, by Hachette, the islands are coloured as being French possessions.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Friday, 21st October, 1887.]

LORD ROSEBERY AT CASTLE DOUGLAS.

A CONFERENCE under the auspices of the Scottish Liberal Association took place yesterday in the Town-hall, Castle Douglas. Mr. Alexander L. Brown, M.P. for the Border Burghs, presided, and delegates were present from twenty-eight Liberal Associations in the western and south-western districts of Scotland.

LORD ROSEBERY, who was received with cheers, said,— . . . From the pale phantom of political conference I want to take you to a Scottish question for a few minutes, only two or three minutes, which never has received any attention in Scotland at all. It is not connected with Ireland, but a Scottish question, which is as much a Scottish question as any question that could be discussed in this hall, and which I think deserves your serious attention. It is connected with the foreign policy of this country. I do not know whether any of you know much about the New Hebrides in this country. They are a remote group of islands in the southern seas; but they have absorbed some of the best energies of Scotland, and those energies seem likely at this moment to be rendered fruitless, I will not say by the inaction of this Government, but what looks suspiciously like the inaction of this Government. I want to direct the attention of this country and this nation to this subject, because I hold, as Scotchmen, we are greatly to blame for not putting it more forward. There was a convention between Great Britain and France that the territory of the New Hebrides should be respected by both; but in May last year the French Government of New Caledonia, which is New Caledonia only in name, despatched a military expedition to the New Hebrides on the pretext of avenging some murders that had taken place in that part of the world, which murders do not seem to have been satisfactorily established; and that military expedition to the New Hebrides, which has remained there ever since, so far as we can learn has not taken any measures to avenge those murders, but what it has done is this: to set up in all the islands the tricolour flag of France, to build permanent barracks, and to establish, so far as we can gather, a permanent occupation of these islands. Now, gentlemen, in my opinion there is no remonstrance that the Government should have spared in order to prevent anything so discreditable both to this country and to France. (Cheers.) We, the late Government, the late Liberal Government (laughter)—the Government that was more treasonable than any other portion of the nation, and which also was notoriously spiritless in its conduct of foreign affairs—sent a strong remonstrance to the French Government, and not merely did that, but gave orders that a British ship of war should remain in these islands as long as a French soldier remained there. (Cheers.) That was the course they took. I believe if the same course had been pursued after the occupation of the New Hebrides had unhappily taken place we should have had the neutrality of the New Hebrides respected. (Cheers.) But I say again deliberately, I will not blame our Government, because we cannot obtain any information as to what our Government is doing; but the result is that the French are there and they have coloured the New Hebrides by their occupation.

[Extract from the *Times*, Wednesday, 12th October, 1887.]

THE FRENCH IN THE NEW HEBRIDES.

(From an occasional Correspondent.)

Port Sandwich, Mallicolo, 8th August.

It is about 340 miles from Noumea to the Island of Sandwich, or Vaté, the most fertile of the New Hebrides group, and the seat of what settlement there is here—that is, taking "settlement" to be an attempt at colonisation and cultivation. The missionaries and the stray copra traders I do not call settlers. A monthly steamer runs from the capital of the French penal colony to Vaté and Mallicolo, the two islands on which military posts are established. This steamer, the "Calédonien," is the property of the Compagnie des Nouvelles Hebrides, and receives a subsidy of 60,000f. (£2,400) a year, being £200 a trip, or about 5s. a mile. The "Calédonien" is a little craft of 110 tons, and can only accommodate half a dozen passengers. She is principally a cargo-boat, and has been running to the islands for years, carrying copra and other produce. That this vessel