

the other, and the French Government had never denied the weight of their obligations. In the course of the last year some negotiations took place with a view to the protection of the settlements, for as colonisation went on there must be some protection for the colonists of either nation. It was no wonder, however, that the Australian colonists saw with concern the continued presence of a military force in the New Hebrides, and Her Majesty's Government had not hesitated to represent to the French Government that the continued presence of such a force had given uneasiness to the Australian Colonies and to the people of this country. (Hear, hear.) His honourable friend had said that he had shown a judicious and official reserve in not giving more information to the House. But his honourable friend knew well that when communications were going on between two countries it was impossible to give details or to place the correspondence in detailed form before the House. He was sure, therefore, his honourable friend could not complain seriously that the Government had not laid the correspondence on the table. This, however, he could say: that there was not any connection admitted between the questions of the New Hebrides and the neutralisation of the Suez Canal. He had admitted to the House that Her Majesty's Government had not objected to discuss the two questions at the same time; and he would ask the Committee, if there were two questions, each of which was of great importance to the country, was it necessary that the discussion of one of them should be delayed until the other was settled? It might be that the French Government, attaching great importance to the Suez Canal question, desired to press it forward rapidly; but, as he had said, Her Majesty's Government could not admit that there was any connection between the two questions. The subject of the colonisation of the New Hebrides formed no part of the agreement between the two countries, and we should be going absolutely beyond our rights if we objected to it. The question was, how the settlers were to be protected. He was sure the Committee would agree that it was most desirable that a good understanding should continue to subsist between two neighbouring countries like France and England, and that a friendly rivalry should not be allowed to degenerate into animosity. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. LABOUCHERE observed that he saw no more reason for our interfering in Asia Minor than in China or Japan. If we availed ourselves of our rights under the Treaty of Cyprus, Turkey would ask of us the *quid pro quo*—viz., the defence of Asia Minor against Russia or any other Power that threatened it. He thought that the position of the French with regard to the New Hebrides was very similar to our position in Egypt; and, before we could expect France to fulfil her pledges in regard to the New Hebrides, we should fulfil our pledges in regard to Egypt. Considering the strong feeling that existed in Australia on the subject, he hoped that every diplomatic endeavour would be made to induce the French to withdraw from the New Hebrides. (Hear, hear.)

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[Extract from the *Times*.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Paris, 23rd August.

THE *République Française* to-day, in an article on the New Hebrides question, says,—

“An agreement on the subject could easily be arrived at if England were willing to put a stop to the absurd calumnies and rodomontades of the Australians. England, who divided New Guinea with Germany, cannot oppose the French annexation of the New Hebrides, but can demand guarantees from France, notably an undertaking not to transport thither either *récidivistes* or convicts. By the exercise of good-will this question will lose the irritating character which it should never have assumed.”

[Extract from the *Chronicle*.]

THE NEW HEBRIDES QUESTION.

(From our Correspondent.)

Paris, Tuesday night.

ALTHOUGH the New Hebrides question has not fallen into the domain of popular controversy in France, it has provoked a good deal of bitterness in official circles. This is well reflected to-day in a long article in the *République Française*. According to the writer, England in Egypt is anxious to allow things to drag, whilst Sir James Fergusson himself declares that quite a different policy must be followed in the distant archipelago. The writer then retraces the history of the New Hebrides group. When France, in 1853, took possession of the Canaque Islands, it was understood that the whole cluster of islands should pass into her hands. There was, of course, no formal declaration, the result being that English and French colonists rapidly settled in the islands. In 1878 France reiterated her desire that the isles should be open and independent; but this, of course, was neither a binding nor a permanent treaty. From this moment English action in the New Hebrides increased, by the influx of new colonists, who were warned by the Governor of the Fiji Islands to register their belongings according to the requirements of English law. Colonisation naturally increased, and in 1882, as far as private property is concerned, the English colonists had the best of it.

This state of things has, however, been changed by the founding at Noumea of a French land company, of which Mr. Higginson is the life and soul. Out of the 12,000 square kilometres, no less than 7,000 have been bought up, the vendors being in most instances the English settlers. The French element is now in the ascendant. To protect these against the attacks of natives and cannibals, France has thought fit to land some troops. Evidently there is no international wrong here, and probably England would let the matter pass if she were not spurred on by Australia. England will, according to the *République Française*, do well to remember that it is highly inopportune to allow colonies to enter into grave international questions in which the eventual responsibility must fall upon the Mother-country. A wise man who keeps dogs must not allow them to bark at the passers-by.