

such a magnificent estate tempted the small stationer from the Luxembourg quarter, the last returned colonist I saw in Noumea. I quote his case as a sample of the "ne'er-do-wells." He was a man who had hoarded a little money, and wished, as he said, to make a future for his children, as well as to save his two boys from the conscription. Enticed by the programme of the Colonisation Society, he invested most of his store in seeds and tools and outfit presumed to be suitable for a colonist in the New Hebrides. Arrived here, he found not the prairie which he had imagined, but a thick jungle, which it was impossible he could ever clear by his own puny exertions. He and his family were all seized by the fever. One child died, and they returned in the greatest misery to Noumea, ruined in health and fortune, and with no prospect but beggary before them when the father's last franc is gone. As I listened to his tale I felt that his maledictions against those whose false tales induced him to break up and leave his little home were justifiable. If this New Hebrides immigration scheme is not a swindle, like that of the Marquis de Ray's in New Britain, it is as bad as the Brazilian attempt to settle English farm-labourers on the tropical rivers of South America, the disastrous effects of which were exposed in the *Times* in 1873, and the immigration from Great Britain stopped in consequence.

French interests at Port Vila, then, are represented by the remains of the first batch of colonists, by an independent French settler, by two or three half-caste Bourbonnais, and by the store and plantation of the New Hebrides Company. This latter, planted with coffee and corn, is really a fine property. It was cleared and established by Captain Donald Macleod, and four years back sold by him to the company. A large amount of native labour is now employed here—men and women to the number of two hundred from the other islands of the group or from the Solomons. As set forth, their service is slavery, or of a character which may be made worse than any slavery depicted in the literature of the abolitionists. Here there is neither law nor public opinion to protect the labourer. The independent French settler is a gentleman at deadly feud with the company, and has received into his service boys who have run away from the neighbouring plantation, defying his neighbours to claim them. But then there is no guarantee that they will be any better treated by Monsieur C. The other settlers around Port Vila are two Swedes and a Portuguese. The Presbyterian missionary, Mr. Mackenzie, resides some four miles distant, but this, lying within his cure, is weekly visited by him. English interests here at present, then, are only represented by the missionary, and an attempt is being made to drive that gentleman out by the introduction of a Marist priest, who is already making trouble at Melé. The two priests settled on Vaté are without doubt brought hither in their quality as Frenchmen. It is not only the spiritual influence of Mr. Mackenzie that is to be undermined, but he, as a British subject, is to be ousted. The same course is to be pursued with Mr. Macdonald at Havannah Harbour. People who, like myself, may not be actively enthusiastic in missionary work will perhaps sympathize with their countrymen. If there are any vested interests in the New Hebrides, they are certainly those of the Presbyterian Mission, which can point to its thirty-five years of work, to its fourteen divines now labouring in the cause, and to the total expenditure of £170,000, money collected in Great Britain and the colonies, as its claim to having the greatest interests here. Are others to reap where it has sown?

The company has done one good thing, however, in settling a medical man at Port Vila. The new doctor has just arrived. He is reported to be subsidised by the Government in addition to his salary from the company. Most of the "colonists" having died or left, his practice, except among the natives, will be limited until the arrival of the next batch of hopeful immigrants from France. The doctor will then be able to alleviate their sufferings somewhat, and perhaps prevent deaths. But he cannot prevent fever. Every one has it here. All work, except such as may consist in supervision of the natives, is impossible to a white man. And so it is little wonder that one finds mere paths on shore, and that the roads and streets marked on the plans in Paris are on the spot not even pegged out. No work, except that absolutely necessary, is done in such a climate. Port Vila possesses a town upon paper. But in a state of nature it is one mass of tropical bush, variegated with cocoanuts, the plantation clearing being but a patch on the hillsides. The houses are so few that, hidden in the trees, they almost escape notice. The tricolour is the only thing out of place. The same flag is hoisted as we round the point at Tukutuk and enter the passage between Hat Island and the mainland, which leads to Havannah Harbour, three hours' sail from Port Vila. But, as we pass the missionary station, the Union Jack is run up by the Rev. Mr. Macdonald, who, with Captain Macleod, represents English interests here. French interests are represented by a store belonging to the New Hebrides Company and the camp of the troops in occupation. Wherever there is a chance the tricolour has been hoisted. Every building on the shore, every boat on the waters owned or occupied by the French is under the flag of France. This seems childish, but is, I believe, part of a plan. The authorities may think that as "trade follows the flag" colonisation will also follow. But take away the troops from Havannah Harbour, and France could here only claim the "interests" of a storekeeper and a liberated convict from New Caledonia as against those of the Englishmen, Mr. Macdonald and Captain Macleod. The latter has the only brick building and the finest residence in the New Hebrides. It is separated from the French camp by a brawling stream, which here and there has formed deep holes in the coral rock through which it runs, basins overshadowed by spreading trees forming the most delicious bathing-places imaginable, where the officers of Her Majesty's ship "Raven," which is now cruising around the New Hebrides, take refreshing dips on their monthly visits to this harbour, when the English flag is displayed on the waters in opposition to the tricolour ashore. The latter, however, looks to the traveller as if it were there to stay. "Nous y sommes, et nous y resterons," boast the officials in Noumea.

It was in May, 1886, that the Acting-Governor of New Caledonia, Monsieur Jacques Marie Benjamin Arthur Ortus, Knight of the Legion of Honour, and Lieutenant-Colonel of Infanterie de Marine, in pursuance of some plan of his own or under instructions, despatched two companies of troops to the New Hebrides. One hundred and fourteen rank and file were landed at Havannah