

THE TIMES, Wednesday, October 26, 1887

THE (SUEZ CANAL AND) NEW HEBRIDES CONVENTIONS.

We have received the following official papers for publication :-

(Suez part omitted)

THE MARQUIS OF SALISBURY TO MR. EGERTON.

Foreign Office, Oct. 21, 1887

Sir, - I enclose to you the draft of a Convention with respect to the New Hebrides, which is the result of the various communications and conversations that have passed upon the subject. The controversy has lasted longer than was anticipated, and has created some disquietude in the minds of Her Majesty's subjects in Australia; and I hope that by accepting the enclosed proposals the French Government may be able to bring it to a satisfactory termination.

In the year 1878 the Marquis d'Harcourt, then French Ambassador of this Court, verbally assured Lord Derby that France entertained no intention of annexing the New Hebrides, and received from Lord Derby a corresponding assurance in return. When in the beginning of last year two of the islands of this group were occupied by a small French force, a general apprehension was created, especially among the colonists of Australia and New Zealand, that a policy was in contemplation not consistent with the assurances the Marquis d'Harcourt had been instructed to convey. The French Government have, however, constantly assured us, in a categorical manner, that they entertained no projects of annexation, and that they were prepared to remove their troops as soon as sufficient security was given to them that the lives and properties of French settlers upon the islands would be protected from attacks by the natives. The provisions of the draft Convention which is enclosed seem well calculated to effect the objects which both Governments desire. But the acceptance of it by Her Majesty's Government must be entirely conditional on an undertaking by the French Government that the evacuation shall not be postponed beyond a fixed date.

The French Government are anxious that this opportunity shall be taken to release them from an engagement entered into in 1847, to the effect that they would not assume the Protectorate of the island of Raiatea, near Tahiti. The desirability of acceding to this pro-

posal, under certain conditions, has for several years been admitted by Her Majesty's Government. In the autumn of 1880 it was proposed to make this concession simultaneously with a Convention which was being negotiated for the settlement of the disputed fishery questions in Newfoundland. In view of the probability of this Convention being concluded, Lord Granville, in October, 1880, consented "to a provisional French Protectorate over the island for a strictly limited time." The agreement for that purpose was renewed at the time of six months, and since then has been renewed every six months up to the present time. The Newfoundland Convention, which was to have made the French Protectorate of Raiatea definitive, was signed in October, 1885, but it contained a provision that it should not be ratified until it had been accepted by the Legislature of Newfoundland. Before its signature, it has been submitted to that colony, and, in its ultimate form, was not objected by them. There was no ground to apprehend its final rejection. After its signature,, however, an objection, which proved in the judgement of the colony fatal, was taken to an article in it which gave the French fishermen liberty to purchase bait in the colonial waters; and during the present year a Bill has passed the Legislature of Newfoundland, and has been approved, which is directly at variance with the stipulation as to the purchase of bait contained in the Convention.

The result of this failure upon Raiatea has been that, contrary to all expectation, the French Protectorate has never been made definitive. It does not, however, appear to Her Majesty's Government desirable, or indeed practicable, to remit to an aboriginal administration an island which has been for several years under French government; and on this account, as well as in view of the peculiar circumstances attending the failure of the Convention of 1885, they are willing to transfer the stipulation in question to the present Convention, subject, of course, to the undertakings given in a *note verbale* to Lord Lyons on the 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1885.

I am, &c.,

SALISBURY

## DRAFT OF THE NEW HEBRIDES CONVENTION.

Article I. – Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique consent à procéder à l'abrogation de la Déclaration de 1847, relative au groupe des îles sous le vent de Tahiti, aussitôt qu'aura été mis à exécution l'accord ci-après formulé pour la protection, à l'avenir, des personnes et des biens aux Nouvelles Hébrides, au moyen d'une Commission Mixte.

Article II. – Une Commission Navale Mixte, composée d'officiers de marine appartenant aux stations Française et Anglaise du Pacifique sera immédiatement constituée ; elle sera chargée de maintenir l'ordre et de protéger les personnes et les biens des sujets Français et Britanniques dans les Nouvelles Hébrides.

Article III. – Une Déclaration à cet effet sera signée par les deux Gouvernements.

Article IV. – Les Règlements destinés à guider la Commission seront élaborés par les deux Gouvernements, approuvés par eux et transmis aux commandants Français et Anglais des bâtiments de la station navale du Pacifique, dans un délai qui n'excédera pas quatre mois à partir de la signature de la présente Convention, s'il n'est pas possible de le faire plus tôt.

Article V. – Dès que ces Règlements auront été approuvés par les deux Gouvernements et que les postes militaires Français auront pu, par suite, être retirés des Nouvelles Hébrides, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique procédera à l'abrogation de la Déclaration de 1847. Il est entendu que les assurances relatives au commerce et aux condamnés qui sont contenues dans la note verbale du 24 Octobre, 1885, communiquées par M. de Freycinet à Lord Lyons, demeureront en pleine vigueur.

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M. FLOURENS TO MR. EGERTON

Sir, - I have received communication of the despatch which Lord Salisbury has addressed to you on the subject of the Convention relating to the New Hebrides and Leeward Islands of Tahiti which has resulted from communications between the two Governments. The

despatch is accompanied by the text of the Convention agreed on between the Governments. I have assured myself that the text is in conformity with our common intentions and I give my approbation to it.

It shall therefore be understood that the two Governments will take their measures that the regulations destined to guide the Mixed Naval Commission contemplated by Article No. II. should be elaborated and approved within a *maximum* period of four months, to date from the signature of the Convention, and I take the engagement in the name of the Government of the Republic to cause the evacuation of the New Hebrides by the French military posts at the expiration of this term, if it be not possible to do so earlier.

Accept, &c.