

ment is also involved. I am informed that two or three years since, in reply to a remonstrance from Australia, the Duc Decazes, then Minister of the Interior, promised the British Ambassador in Paris (Lord Lyons) that, although the French Government could not forcibly control the movements of free men, they would, as far as they could, divert from the Australian Colonies any pardoned or time-expired convicts, and any Communists liberated from New Caledonia. If the "Griffin" was chartered by the French authorities, as appears to have been the case, the promise made by the Duc Decazes has been broken.

8. Owing to the absence of Sir Hercules Robinson from Wellington, I have been unable to communicate with His Excellency, so as to ascertain fully what action he thinks should be taken; and His Excellency cannot address the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the subject by the present mail. But I have now placed you in possession of what I believe are substantially the facts of the case; and although I requested you to consider my first telegram and its instructions withdrawn, I now request that—remembering that despatches from the Governor will doubtless be forwarded by the next mail—you will communicate the facts to the Agents-General for New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria, and will, in conjunction with those gentlemen, take such steps as you may feel are justified by a fair desire to protect New Zealand and Australia from a repetition of the wrong now complained of. You are at liberty to state that a very strong feeling indeed exists in Auckland respecting the arrival of the men in question; that protests against their landing have been received from the Mayor of that city on behalf of the people; and that, judging from the newspapers, that which is accepted as the action of the French authorities in New Caledonia is reprobated by all classes throughout the colony.

I have, &c.,

JOHN HALL.

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

## No. 2.

The PREMIER to the GOVERNOR.

*Memorandum for His Excellency.*

MINISTERS present their respectful compliments to the Governor, and submit, for His Excellency's information, the following statement respecting the recent arrival in this colony of a number of amnestied Communists and time-expired criminal prisoners from New Caledonia.

2. On the 18th February, a telegram was received from the Minister resident in Auckland, stating that the schooner "Griffin" had arrived in the Manukau Harbour from New Caledonia, and had brought thence eleven political offenders and nine convicts for criminal offences. It was further stated that all the men had been conditionally released, and that the schooner had been chartered by the French authorities. Subsequently, the Minister telegraphed that careful inquiries seemed to confirm the information he had sent. He also transmitted an extract from a letter written by a British shipping agent in New Caledonia, who stated that he had "booked for Auckland" a number of men who were waiting for passage by a schooner expected from Hiscock Island; and who added that, "should favourable news be received from the passengers per 'Griffin,' there will be a number more to go from this place."

3. The Premier hereupon telegraphed to the Governments of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria, repeating the information before stated, and asking whether those colonies had been similarly treated, and whether they would join New Zealand in urging the Imperial Government to remonstrate with France against permitting a repetition, on the part of its representatives in New Caledonia, of proceedings so likely to prove highly injurious to the colonies. The Chief Secretary of New South Wales replied, "Batches of pardoned convicts from New Caledonia have on several occasions arrived here;" while from Queensland the reply was, "On two or three occasions escaped Communists have reached our coast, but not, as far as we are aware, with the connivance of the French authorities." Both Governments explained what had been attempted by them in the way of legislation against the landing of French convicts, political or criminal; both also agreed to join in the proposed remonstrance through the Agents-General for the colonies. Victoria has not replied, no doubt owing to the fact that a general election was proceeding at the time the telegram was sent.

4. Considering it to be of importance that some action should at once be taken to protest against the wrong that had been done, the Agent-General was directed—pending such steps as, upon his return to Wellington, His Excellency might think necessary—to do what was possible, in concert with the representatives of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria, towards causing a remonstrance to be addressed to the French Government.

5. Inquiries were continued in Auckland by the police, for the purpose of ascertaining the crimes, sentences, and conditions of release of the men individually. The result was such that a second telegram was sent to the Agent-General withdrawing the first, and directing him to suspend action until he had received letters that would be forwarded by the outgoing mail. It was found, in fact, that the "Griffin" was chartered by the French authorities, and that they paid the passages of the liberated Communists; but that the men who had been criminal convicts had paid for their own passages. It was further ascertained that these latter were, so far as regards the operation of the French law, free to return to France, though the amnestied Communists were not at liberty to land in France or in any French territory.

6. The wrong done to New Zealand was thus shown to be less grave than it had been believed to be, but it remained of a character necessitating protest against repetition, and against the unfriendliness of the action, if not against a breach of good faith and of promise. A statement of all the facts was accordingly sent to the Agent-General by the mail *via* San Francisco, and he was instructed to consult with the other Agents-General, and to do what he could, pending action by His Excellency, to secure that a remonstrance should be made to the French Government against the acts of its representatives in New Caledonia.