

Clause 18 (formerly 19, Executive regulations to be made) agreed to with amendment.

Clauses 19 and 20 (legal provisions) agreed to.

Clause 21 (formerly 20, law to come into force on promulgation of first regulation) agreed to.

Clause 22 (formerly 23, repeal of provisions contrary to Bill in other Acts) agreed to.

New clause 23 (a report to be made to President of Republic on working of law) agreed to.

13th February.—The Senate resumed the consideration of clause 4. Put as a whole, and agreed to. Also clause 8 (postponed), agreed to.

On the question, "That the Bill as amended be agreed to," the Senate divided—For the Bill, 198; against, 20: majority, 178.

16th February, 1885.

F. D. BELL.

## No. 12.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—  
7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 25th February, 1885.  
Upon thinking carefully over the debate in the French Senate on the second reading of the *Récidiviste* Bill, it seemed to me that the new facts which had come to light, and the change made in the structure of the Bill, afforded a fair opportunity for a fresh remonstrance to the Government of the Republic before the Bill could get down again to the Chamber of Deputies. The Agents-General thereupon asked for an interview with Lord Derby on the subject, which took place on the 18th instant.

As on previous occasions, my colleagues asked me to explain the position of the matter to Lord Derby. His Lordship concurred with us in thinking that, under the circumstances which had occurred, the Foreign Office might make a new representation to the French Government. He desired us, however, to put what we had said in writing, and I accordingly prepared a joint letter, at the request of my colleagues, which we have sent in to Lord Derby, and of which I transmit a copy herewith.

You will no doubt have noticed the significant statement in the Senate Committee's report, which I sent you the other day, that what is left of the State domain in New Caledonia will barely suffice, during the next three years, for the concessions of land which are required by the law of 1854. Just after the Bill was before the Senate last August the French Government issued a decree for the limitation of the penal territory in that colony, setting aside 50,000 acres for the operation of the *récidiviste* scheme. This decree caused vehement protests in New Caledonia; but at a meeting of the Conseil Supérieur des Colonies, a few days ago, the Under-Secretary of State for the French Colonies said that these protests were much exaggerated, that the decree had been issued because it was necessary, under penalty of soon coming to the time when the law of 1854 could no longer be applied, and that, if the penal reserve turned out to be too large, it could be remedied.

Desiring to confine the letter of the Agents-General as much as possible to what had taken place in the Senate, I thought it better to omit any mention of the tendency of public opinion in France against the Bill; but it may interest you if I briefly refer to statements which have appeared in some of the leading papers. The *Justice* says that the Bill, although it had been got through the Senate with the utmost difficulty after two years, merely satisfied a Ministerial phantasy, and even now decided nothing. The *Temps* says that the Senate had refused to follow the Chamber of Deputies in its Utopias, or to let itself be seduced by a dream of the regeneration of habitual criminals. The *France* says that the debate had demonstrated the foolishness of the Bill and the futility of any hope of free colonization; that the explanations of the Government had not met the arguments of their opponents; that the evidence proved there was no room left in New Caledonia; that it was no use to vote for relegation "in colonies or possessions," when there were none at the disposal of the Executive; that the cost would be tens of millions of francs every year; that what was taking place in every English colony at the mere mention of *récidivistes* being sent to New Caledonia ought to be a lesson; and that the Chambers ought not to pass a law which could never be carried out, and would be promulgated in vain. The *Economiste Français*, while supporting the principle of transporting great criminals, disapproves of the *récidiviste* scheme, and declares that it must yet be profoundly altered. The *Journal des Débats* says that the Chambers will have performed a *tour de force* if they pass a law which does not say where the *récidivistes* are to go, what they are to do, how many of them there are to be, or what they are to cost; that the Senate did not know what it was doing; that the estimates were mere suppositions; that it was impossible to estimate the cost within millions; and that a legislator fails in his duty when he votes, merely to have the air of doing something, for a law which he knows can never be carried out, and when he seeks to shield himself by throwing upon the Government the responsibility of enormous financial sacrifices and an inevitable failure. It is to be hoped that such expressions of public opinion, taking place within the last few days, will help any new representation which the Foreign Office may make in accordance with the letter of the Agents-General.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

## Enclosure.

THE AGENTS-GENERAL for NEW SOUTH WALES, VICTORIA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, QUEENSLAND, and NEW ZEALAND to the COLONIAL OFFICE.

### *Récidiviste Bill.*

MY LORD,—

London, 25th February, 1885.

In compliance with your Lordship's desire, we beg now to place before you, in writing, the representations we made to you at our interview of the 18th instant on the subject of the *Récidiviste* Bill.