

of their own, and the year's deficit is to be covered by the issue of six-year Treasury bonds to the amount of 167,000,000 francs, instead of by the issue of bonds for 383,000,000 francs, redeemable in sixty-six years. It was not without some difficulty that this strange compromise was agreed upon. The three most important members of the Government, the Premier, the Finance Minister, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs were strongly in favour of adhering to their financial scheme, and of standing or falling by the event. If these views had prevailed, the speedy fall of the Goblet Ministry would have been assured, but the dissentients have not stood out against the general opinion of their colleagues, and the evil hour has accordingly been put off. The shorter date which has been fixed for the repayment of the new bonds may cause embarrassment to the Ministry of the day when the bonds fall due, but this is rather an affair for M. Goblet's successors than for himself or for any of his staff. To a Ministry which exists on sufferance a delay of six or of sixty years comes to much the same thing. The really grave consideration for France is that these Budget deficits have now come to be looked for as matters of course. Each year adds its regular quota to the enormous debt of the country, and, whatever party or whatever person may be in power, the financial result is the same. The expenditure is largely in excess of the revenue, and when the year's *compte définitif* is published the alarming truth becomes at length fully known and it alarms nobody. Some further progress was made with the Budget on Saturday in Committee, and there is no reason to suppose that any new crisis will arise at a later date of the proceedings. But the turn which has been given to affairs can hardly have served to strengthen the position of M. Goblet's Ministry, or to increase the very limited confidence reposed in it by the Chamber or by the country.

French colonial affairs were the subject before the Chamber on Saturday. The part of the debate which has most interest for this country was a speech by Mgr. Freppel on the New Hebrides question, to which the Government made no reply. Mgr. Freppel is one of those troublesome ecclesiastics who bring, not peace, but a sword to the business to which they intervene. To a person of this kind the relation of the New Hebrides to France offered an opportunity too tempting to be lost. The excitement which had been caused in our Australian colonies and in this country by alleged French proceedings in the New Hebrides will certainly not be allayed by Mgr. Freppel's speech. The complaint has been that France, in defiance of treaty obligations and indirect opposition to the repeated assurances given by M. de Freycinet, has asserted and maintains something very like a sovereignty over the islands. French military posts are said to have been established there with the French flag floating over them, and acts to have been done involving a claim to exclusive local jurisdiction. Whatever the facts may have been, M. de Freycinet was careful to minimize the meaning which could possibly be attached to them, and to negative the idea that France was aiming at any future annexation of the group. Mgr. Freppel is of a different mind. He is pleased at the thought that something has been already done to correct the mistake of not having formally attached the New Hebrides to New Caledonia as a French possession, and he insists that the policy thus begun must be carried out to its completion by the permanent and definitive establishment of a French protectorate over the islands. Nor will he be content even with this. He has an eye also to the Solomon Islands and to the leeward group of the Society Islands, and to thus bringing French colonial possessions into close neighbourhood to another point of the Australian coast. The natural fear of our colonies is that French acquisitions in Oceania mean for them so many new penal settlements, into which France will deport her worst class of convicts, and whence they will find their way, with or without her connivance, to the nearest unguarded coast. This apprehension Mgr. Freppel condescends to notice and to meet in a manner satisfactory to himself. Having declared that neither England nor Australia has any rights in the matter of the New Hebrides, and that France consequently has a free hand to deal with them just as she will, he adds that a declaration on the part of the French Government that they shall not be used for the creation of a penal settlement will be amply sufficient to dispel all alarms. We doubt if the Australian colonies will be as easily satisfied as Mgr. Freppel thinks. What they might ask, could be the value of a prospective declaration put by Mgr. Freppel into the mouth of a Government which would have disclaimed the most explicit assurances of their predecessors, and have set at naught the most indisputable treaty engagements before the occasion could arise at which such a declaration would need to be made. It could only be by a breach of public faith that France would be in a position to create a penal settlement in the New Hebrides. The adviser who suggests that she should break faith once would have no scruple in urging a repetition of the course, if it happened to be found convenient a second time. We do not believe that France will dishonour itself by following Mgr. Freppel's counsel. But, once as a defaulter, her claim to be trusted again would be much too slender for her new promises to have the calming and reassuring effect which Mgr. Freppel has no hesitation in ascribing to them. It would have been more satisfactory if some formal reply had been made to Mgr. Freppel's speech, but we need attach no great significance to the silence with which it was received. It was perhaps felt that the aggressive orator was at once irresponsible and irrepressible.

One important difference between the English and the French colonial systems was brought out clearly in the course of Saturday's debate. M. Richard Waddington calls for customs duties on foreign imports in all French colonies, and particularly in Cochin China, and he has informed in reply, by M. Delaporte, that a Bill to impose them is in preparation. The object is that the commerce of the Mother-country may have some advantage from the existence of these colonies. It is the absence of any such arrangement which makes the spread of English colonization a common benefit to the world, and it is its general introduction into French colonies which has sunk them to the level at which they stand. Their existence under such management is a questionable advantage to France and less than none to any other Power.