

*The Marquis of Salisbury to the Marquis of Dufferin.*

My Lord,

*Foreign Office, May 31, 1892.*

M. WADDINGTON has urged upon me once or twice the importance of procuring the enactment during the present Session of Parliament of the Newfoundland Bill which we introduced last year, and which was suspended in the hope that some satisfactory colonial legislation might be substituted for it.

Although I regret that, for causes which are sufficiently known, it was not possible to pass that Bill through the House of Commons in the year 1891, I cannot admit that the French Government have any right of complaint upon that ground. The Bill was a valuable measure, and the enactment of some such provision by the Imperial Government may very probably prove to be necessary. But the French Government have no right to require it. As I observed more than once to the French Ambassador at the time, and to your Excellency's predecessor, the French Government do not derive from the Agreement of the 11th March, 1891, any title to inquire into the administrative machinery, or the legislative provisions, by which we propose to give effect to our engagements under that Convention. We have engaged to execute the decisions of the Commission of Arbitration. If we fail to do so, the French Government will have a just and strong right to make remonstrance and to obtain redress. But until we fail in the engagement we have made, they have no right to assume that we shall not keep it, or to criticise the preparations we are making for doing so.

We are perfectly ready to go on with the Arbitration so soon as it shall be ratified by the French Chamber. If the Arbitrators should decide in our favour, we can have no difficulty in executing their decisions. If the Arbitrators shall decide against us, Her Majesty's Government will scrupulously observe the Agreement which they have signed; and the legislative arrangements, if any, necessary to enable them to do so will receive the sanction of Parliament. We should have a right to make this assumption in any case, but in the present case we can make it with increased certainty; inasmuch as an undertaking to that effect has been placed upon its journals by the House of Commons.

I do not think it is probable that any legislation on this subject can be passed during the present Session; but as there is no chance of the Arbitration being finished before the conclusion of the Session, the obligation under which we lie under the Agreement of the 11th March will not arise.

I am, &c.  
(Signed) SALISBURY.

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