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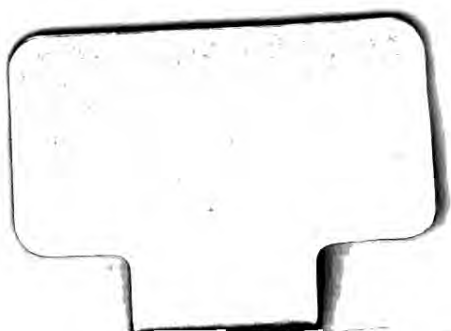
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THE
CONDITION AND CAPABILITIES
OF
VAN DIEMEN'S LAND,
AS
A PLACE OF EMIGRATION.

BEING
THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF NEARLY
TEN YEARS' RESIDENCE IN THE COLONY.

BY JOHN DIXON.

“Therefore in Van Diemen's Land, while poverty bows down the head of the farmer, wealth smiles in the face of the grazier.”—*Page 56.*

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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages are given to the world, with a feeling of confidence as to the worth of their contents; but with extreme diffidence as to their merits as a composition.

Having resided in Van Diemen's Land, during the long period which my title page declares, it would be strange, if I returned to my native country, unversed in the local affairs of the colony, and unqualified to give a perfect account of its general condition.

Still, the mere circumstance of a long residence in a country, may not, of itself, be sufficient to authorise us to speak in absolute terms of its specific characteristics. But having been engaged for a time in agriculture, and for a much longer period in trade in the colony; and as my business led me among every order of the society, and into every department of their affairs, I think I may deem myself tolerably competent to perform the task that I have undertaken. Moreover, I was not the careless desultory observer, who this moment applies his mind to a subject, and the next, directs it to another; but from the hour of my arrival to the day of my departure, the interests of Van Diemen's Land, combined

with those of the mother country, were the objects of my devoted inquiry and meditation.

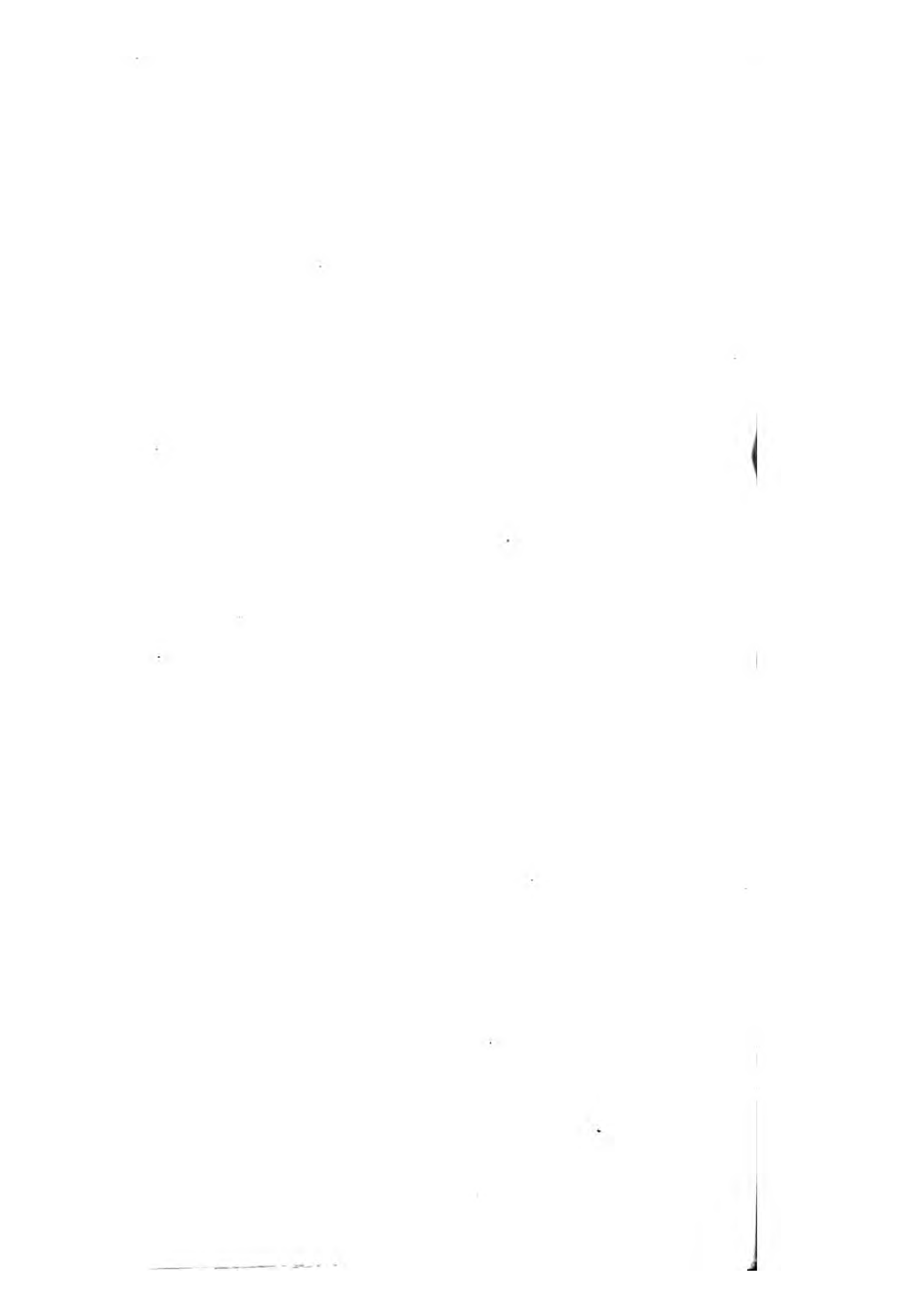
As I have spoken somewhat freely upon the form of the Government; upon the convict discipline, and upon the general character of the free inhabitants, it may be necessary for me, not only to say, but aver, that no sinister design has prompted my pen; that I cherish no animosity towards any person in the settlement; and that, during my stay there, I clung to no party, and ministered to no opposition. I quitted the colony, only because its prosperity had decayed; and I have come home, with a free judgment and an unbiassed mind, as respects its present condition and future prospects,—resolved never to return to its shores again.

Finding, upon my arrival, that misconception and false knowledge concerning it, still maintain the ascendent, and that, although many works have been published lately upon adjacent colonies, not one has appeared upon Van Diemen's Land alone, I have viewed it almost as a duty, due to myself and to the public, to endeavour to draw aside the veil that conceals the colony, so that future calamitous disappointments might be obviated, and a union of improvement and advantage effected between it and the mother country.

Hence, I have first attempted to show, impartially, and as clearly as I could, the agricultural and commercial condition of the colony. The picture being discouraging, I have thence proceeded to point out the causes of such a picture existing; and next, to demonstrate how the Island's restoration might be achieved, and its prosperity permanently established.

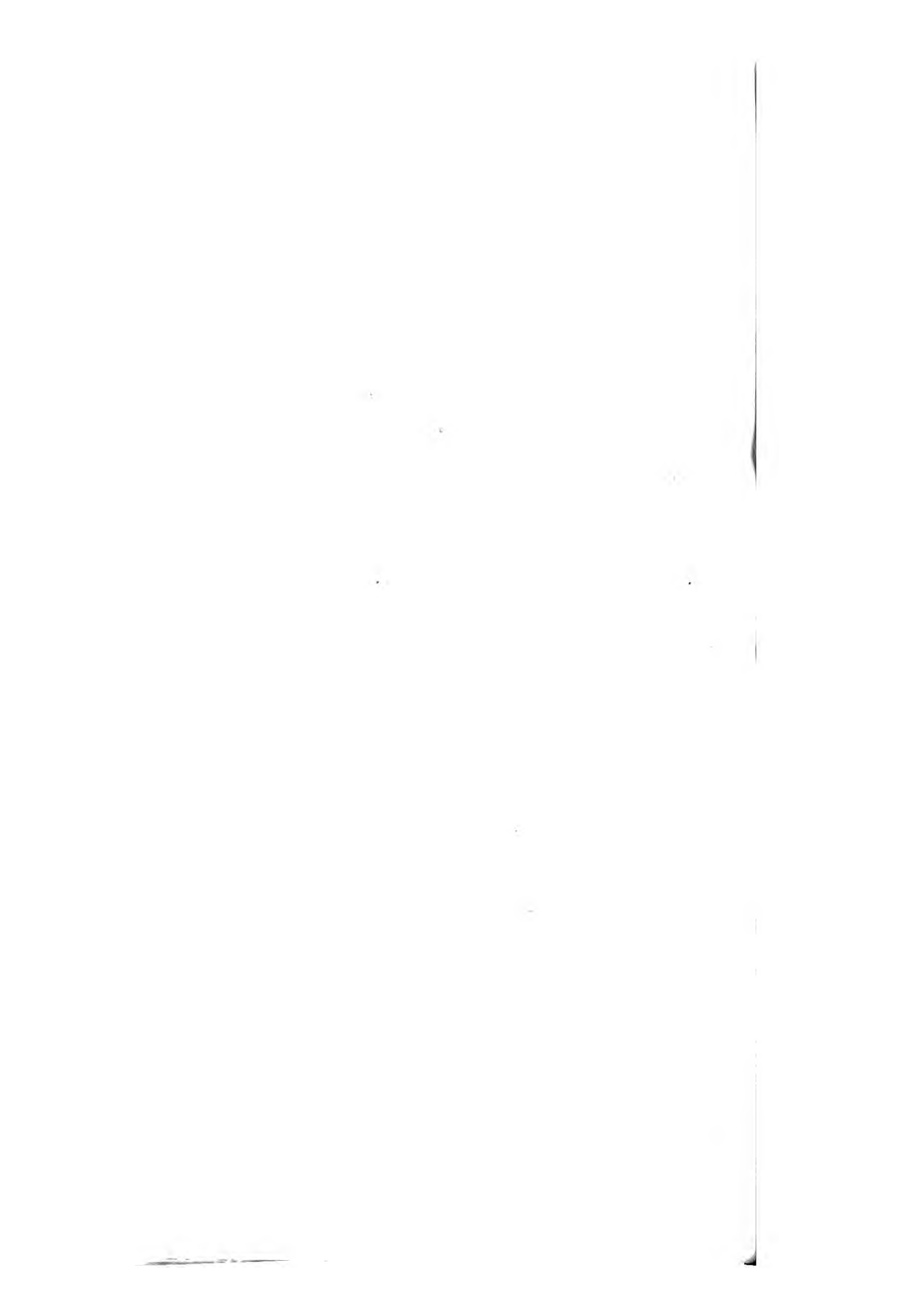
These materials I could with ease have greatly enlarged, by the introduction of extracts from colonial periodicals and official documents; but as lengthy details could answer no purpose, and would rather tend to weary than enlighten the reader, I have purposely compressed my matter into as small a compass as possible.

In this age, so peculiarly that for writing, printing, and publishing; when in every neighbourhood we find authors, and in every company at least scribblers, it may not be thought presumptuous in me to take up my pen also. If I be found unworthy to be enrolled in the list of the former, I am quite content to fall into the ranks of the latter. I have soared no higher, than to the attainment of clearness of arrangement, and perspicuity of diction; and if I have reached these, I am satisfied. It may be, that I shall be assailed by those to whom my ideas on the state and prospects of the colony are repugnant; but the violence of party, or the sneer of patronage, will have little power to disturb a mind, that dares to pursue the honest objects of exposing error, declaring truth, and promoting improvement.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
Desultory Remarks on Emigration	9
CHAPTER II.	
General Description of the Colony, of its Natural Productions, and of its Aborigines	16
CHAPTER III.	
Of the Climate, its General Character, and Effects	24
CHAPTER IV.	
The Constitution of the Legislature, and Government of the Colony	30
CHAPTER V.	
The Condition of the Convict, and Regulations of Prison Discipline	37
CHAPTER VI.	
Hobart Town described, and the General Character of the Free Inhabitants	48
CHAPTER VII.	
The Common State of Husbandry in Van Diemen's Land	54
CHAPTER VIII.	
The Commerce and Inland Trade of the Island, &c.	59
CHAPTER IX.	
The Causes of the Declension of the Colony, and means proposed for its speedy recovery	62



THE
CONDITION AND CAPABILITIES
OF
VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

CHAPTER I.

DESULTORY REMARKS ON EMIGRATION.

THE desire to better our condition in the world is, with all of us, a predominant passion. It is a passion, however, implanted in us for wise purposes; since it rouses our dormant energies, gives impetus and aim to our industry, awakens within us talent, that without it, might have slumbered, through life, unknown; and, in its social consequences, is the animating spirit of that enterprise and intelligence which distinguish and adorn civilized existence. But it is beneficial, only when thus actuating us to rational, and practical ends; for if it be allowed merely to brood within the mind, in the producing of speculative dreams, it will, by-and-bye, as is but too often witnessed, cause to grow up within us unbusiness-like turns of thought, which, if we ever attempt to execute, can lead to nothing but acts of weakness and imprudence. Hence it is that we so often behold innocence overtaken by misfortune; vivacity changed into

melancholy ; and virtuous simplicity overwhelmed by calamities.

It is a sad truth, that too many, in matters affecting their dearest interests, regard public example more than private counsel, and are more guided by the conduct of others, than by their own judgment ; thereby, too often bringing present mischief upon themselves, and involving their future prospects in overclouded embarrassment. What many persons are doing, we wish to do also. When we see our neighbours quitting their country, and emigrating to another, in order, as they say, to better their condition in the world, we catch the prevailing fervor, and transplant ourselves likewise. We are simple enough, to trust implicitly, in all we hear concerning the new land of promise, and with earnest impatience we go off thither, as if eager to fly from the voice of prudence, that whispers behind us,—enquire before you go !

In nothing do mankind show their credulity more, than in attaching ready belief to what is affirmed respecting foreign countries. The grossest falsehoods can gain currency, if the points affirmed in them be said to have occurred in a distant part of the world. And the more remote the region, too, the quicker the credence to every tale concerning it.

Artful men, have at all times availed themselves of this weakness, to impose upon humanity ; and when aided by only a little dexterity, have seldom miscarried in their designs.

New colonies are continually pointed to, as certain to afford opportunity for the rapid accumulation of riches ; the resources of such places being always represented as unbounded. Every eye is caught by the glaring picture, which, for the day, happens to be ostentatiously spread to view through every channel of publicity. Extravagant accounts are promulgated, and the most romantic schemes

and wildest speculations suggested, until these are listened to, embraced, and run after by crowds of visionaries and adventurers.

Of late years, the planting and rearing of new colonies, have been great and constant objects of attention with the people of England. The capacities of those settlements have been exaggerated, in the imaginations of the multitude; and even the thoughts of some of the most eminent men in the kingdom have been set at work, to know how to turn these teeming riches to the best account. Emigration having suggested itself, as the most promising expedient for this purpose, and such an expedient depending for its success upon public accord, a system of continual public advocacy has been organized, by which to inspire the lower and middle orders with a longing after those Colonies: making it sufficiently strong to induce them to become the willing subjects of every contemplated experiment. Thus have arts innumerable been used, to create among those classes a disrelish towards their native country; while, at the same time, the press has teemed with inflated descriptions of salubrious climates, picturesque scenery, fertile soils, and luxuriant productions; together with agreeable tales of cheap living, riches in plenty, and affluent husbands, waiting eagerly for any nymphs to make wives of: until the soft brains of many deluded people of both sexes, and of all classes, full of the ideas excited by such fanciful pictures, have induced them, year after year, to turn their backs on their native country, and flow off to other regions, which, on arriving at, are found to be very different indeed from the El-Dorados hopefully painted in the imagination. Like the enthusiasts of the sixteenth century, they then open their eyes to a reality—the antipodes of their previous enchantments. Instead of embracing wealth, they discover that

they have embraced poverty ; and instead of finding joy and happiness, are plunged into sorrow and banishment.

It is a great mistake to believe, that truth, prompts and actuates every one, who writes or speaks in praise of colonization. Many put forth specious accounts of new colonies, from motives of private gain. Some wish to dispose of their land to the best advantage, and on that account endeavour to draw capitalists thither. Others seek to allure both capital and labor, in order to borrow the one, and sink the market price of the other. Emigration agents, to fill their vessels speedily with passengers, often invent falsehoods in praise of the colonies ; and, (to use a vulgar expression) “ puff them off ” in flashy advertisements about the streets.

Ignorance, too, prompts the pens of many others. Even the Administrators of Government are not “ safe authorities ” on such a subject. As the colonies are far away from the mother country, and are never visited by any of the ministry, they cannot speak from personal knowledge. They can only echo what the public dispatches relate ; these are sure to be flattering ; for a governor, in order to retain his always lucrative appointment, will never fail, to deliver fair accounts of the state of the settlement, over which he presides ; while venal parasites are found, in numbers, ready to vindicate his honor, and corroborate his assertions.

But, admitting that the public dispatches on this subject are ever the offsprings of candour and veracity ; yet, the governors of the British Colonies, owing to the professions from which they are chosen, are seldom capable of furnishing accurate information with respect to the agricultural, commercial, or civil condition of a community.

From whatever cause it may proceed, the ignorance of England, with respect to the actual circumstances and

interests of her colonies, is proverbial ; and the one I am about to discourse upon has, perhaps, suffered more from such ignorance, than any of all the others.

Nothing is more silly than the practice of indiscriminately emigrating to new colonies. A little reflection might convince any one, that all persons are not equally adapted to become colonists. Habits unfit some ; their calling others ; and for this reason it is a crime in the patrons of emigration to attempt to promote it without choice or distinction. Moreover, when a man's calling is such, as to ensure him a subsistence in any part of the world, why should he be so strongly tempted to emigrate to infant settlements ? the habits and qualifications that conduce to prosperity at home, are those alone which can produce the like effect abroad ; why then should fanciful and unreal inducements be held out to him to make the exchange ? He should be left to his own choice, with the honest truth alone for his guide.

Some are struck with the love of a particular spot, because it is called " a fine country." But a fine country is a very indefinite expression ; for it may be fine for many purposes and many people, and yet very bad for as many others. Manufactories may be flourishing here, while, perhaps, they cannot be established there ; and indolence, drunkenness, and prodigality, will no more escape their consequences in that, than in other lands.

Notwithstanding all that some people have dreamed about the gigantic fortunes, which have been realized in foreign and remote countries, I am of opinion, that, in proportion to the population, wealth is not near so often come at abroad, as at home.

All men cannot be rich, no more than all can be lords or sovereigns ; there have been indigence and affluence in every civilized community since the foundation of the world ; and

new countries exhibit this diversity as well as old. Nature has given to some men a talent peculiarly favourable for the acquisition of riches; while to others she has denied it. In all places we find instances of some rising from poverty to opulence; and others, in spite of every exertion, sinking into misfortune and beggary: wherever the one goes, prosperity follows him; and wherever the other, disappointment and embarrassment. This talent, or peculiar natural endowment, seems not to consist alone in the two qualities of having industry and frugality; but to be an innate disposition, or turn of mind, lying in the combination of a quick foresight and sound judgment: and although, no doubt, it is greatly assisted by the corresponding operations of industry and frugality, yet often, independent of these, it works its way against all impediments, and seats its possessor upon the heights of prosperity. Such being the secret why some are rich and others poor, we may next ask ourselves, "Do we possess this talent?" and perhaps the retrospect of our antecedent career in life, may be sufficient, to afford an answer. Wherever we travel, our talents and qualifications travel with us; and it is these, after all, that we must wholly depend upon. It is not a country, that can make us rich; but it is we, that must make the country rich.

It is a great fallacy to think another country better than our own, because higher wages are procured there; for the laws which regulate wages in England, are the same which regulate wages everywhere else. Money must be estimated, not according to the number of pieces we receive, but according to the amount of commodities or conveniencies of life, it can command. If these be not augmented, in proportion to the augmentation of our income, what better can we be for having exchanged our abode?—and is not our increase of fortune only nominal?

The master that pays high wages, must get high profits, so as to enable him to pay such high wages; and this reciprocity brings down the advantages of each to a common level again. Each may think himself better off than he was before, but, he really is not so, for although he may now have more money, he cannot procure more money's worth. The only two inducements, then, for any one to leave his own, for another country, is, first, if he be an artizan, or laborer, "constant employment at his trade, when he cannot obtain such at home;" and, secondly, if a man of capital, "a larger, and more profitable market for its employment.

That these inducements really exist, should be carefully ascertained before the exchange of place be made; for false knowledge in such an affair, is as great a calamity as can fall upon any human being. If he possess only a little money, he must balance in his mind, his known, and probable expenses; he must bear in memory that he shall have to maintain himself (and his family, if he have one) in idleness, for some time after his arrival; and he must think of the forlorn condition, into which he would be thrown, were he to be disappointed in his prospects, and destitute of means to restore himself to his native country.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COLONY, OF ITS NATURAL PRODUCTIONS, AND OF ITS ABORIGINES.

ON account of the common mistake which is made of confounding "Van Diemen's Land" with "New South Wales," and thinking Hobart Town and Sydney to be two towns within one colony, I shall, before entering on my discourse upon the former country, endeavour to show the distinction between it and the latter, by defining, as well as I can, the situation of each.

New Holland is a great island, or more properly, a small continent, lying upon the south-eastern corner of the globe. Round about upon this continent are seated the several settlements, or colonies of "New South Wales," "Port Philip," "Swan River," "King George's Sound," and the recently established colony of "South Australia."

Van Diemen's Land is an "island" lying to the southward of this small continent of New Holland, about 160 miles long, and 80 miles broad. It is separated from New Holland by Bass's-strait; a channel measuring 120 miles across at its widest part. Sydney is the capital of New South Wales; and Hobart Town, that of Van Diemen's Land; and the relation between these two towns is no more than that between London and Dublin. But the distance between Hobart Town and Sydney is a deal greater than that between the English and Irish capitals. The distance between the two former is about 800 miles; and the average passage is reckoned to take, with a fair wind, from five to seven days, though in foul weather it takes much longer. I myself have been three weeks on the passage.

With this description, I think I may proceed, free from the danger, that the island, which more particularly forms my subject, will be confounded with other places, so distinct, though adjacent to it.

In Van Diemen's Land there have arisen several towns, but Hobart Town and Launceston are the chief. As the former is the seat of the local Government, it is denominated the capital. Launceston lies on the northern extremity, looking towards Bass's-strait; Hobart Town on the southern, facing the Southern ocean. These two towns are situated on the only two navigable rivers: the Tamar and the Derwent.

Hobart Town stands in a cove, called Sullivan's Cove, on the "River Derwent," about 30 miles up from its mouth; and Launceston several miles up the Tamar.

The Derwent is a spacious and well-sheltered river, admired by every one by whom it is visited. It has two entrances—Storm Bay, and D'Entrecasteaux's Channel. The bay is a wide, easy, and safe entrance; but the channel is unsafe, and very dangerous for strangers to attempt. Four or five vessels have been wrecked in it within the last two or three years, and many lives lost.

The river Tamar is tortuous, narrow, and incommodious; in every way inferior to the Derwent in respect to facilities for shipping.

Van Diemen's Land is about sixteen thousand miles remote from England; and as steam navigation has not yet been established to this extent, the average voyage thither is not made in less than from four to five months. The western side of the island, which presents itself to us as we approach from England, is wild, barren, and appalling; so that all the unfavourable ideas which the uncouth name of the island may have raised in the mind, are confirmed by the dreary and broken prospect stretching before us. The eastern

aspect, however, is of an opposite character, stretching along in romantic and diversified liveliness.

The known ports or harbours in and about the coast are few ; but, as a correct marine survey of the island has not yet been performed, the unknown may be many.

The interior is characterised by its uncommon features ; being, in many respects, unlike any other part of the world. The surface heaves up into irregular ranges of mountain scenery, crowded over, and intersected in all fashions and directions. We never see one mountain alone ; but where one is, there are chains of others, running up, round, and about, in open wildness and disorder ;—towering here, and sinking there, in bewildering, yet striking confusion. From April to October, the highest are capped with snow. The whole face of the country is covered thickly with trees of immense height and circumference, growing close together, and reaching to a great loftiness before they shoot out their branches. Their leaves are unfading, but dusky and mournful, and seem, in the distance, nearly black, throwing an air of heavy gloom over the face of nature. The valleys are circumscribed within narrow limits, and, like the mountains, spread over with high, sturdy forests.

It is not my business to descant on the physical formation of the island, or to enter into a disquisition as to its probable origin. But, if I may be allowed an opinion, it is, that Van Diemen's Land has, at some period, been connected by an isthmus with the adjacent continent of New Holland ; and that both have been thrown up from the ocean by some extraordinary eruption below : as each demonstrates this by the multiplicity of sea-shells and marine petrifications that are scattered over their loftiest mountains.

Van Diemen's Land is ill watered, having but a few rivulets, and not one inland navigable river. Although some of

these have been named after noble rivers in the east and west of Europe, yet they are all too shallow, even for the smallest traffic ; and although the Derwent, from its mouth up to Hobart Town, is not surpassed by any river in the world, still its navigation ceases fifteen or twenty miles further.

Those tracts which have never been disturbed in their primitive wildness, are called, not the forest, but "the Bush." The native tree and shrub are not subject to the annual decay and fall of leaf, which are common in other regions: but here, the leaf is as lasting as the stem, and both live and die together. Nature, too, clothes herself with a constant verdure ; and, even in the midst of winter, retains her greenness. While the earth is covered, often ankle deep, in snow, the grass, the flowers, the shrubs, and the trees, remain unchanged, and are as green and as healthy as in the middle of summer. But, notwithstanding its exterior garment, no country can be imagined more dreary than the Bush of Van Diemen's Land. Travel through it hundreds of miles, and your prospect is the same. Tiers of mountains still environ you, and you see nothing but a wearisome uniformity. Nothing in the shape of diversity presents itself either to attract the eye, or captivate the imagination. The stately gum-tree, with its dark and heavy foliage, shoots up before you, wherever you turn your head ; birds flutter in the branches, and at intervals emit a wild chirp, a dolorous scream, or a dull caw ; but the note is without melody,—harsh and displeasing to the ear. The plumage of many of the species, however, is pretty, and that of the cockatoo, very handsome. Tracts of land are at times seen, bursting with fertility, and many more, rocky, sandy, and sterile. Some have a park-like appearance, free from underwood and obstruction ; and others are so overgrown with these, as to

be almost impervious. A few of the native shrubs are pretty; but so sparingly scattered, that they have to be sought out. The wild flowers are in small variety; but some of those that exist are very handsome when closely examined; although, being all diminutive, they are often trampled over. The indigenous trees grow up to enormous height. The gum is the highest and greatest; and in height and circumference, is reckoned to be the biggest in the world. It grows straight upward, and shoots out its branches above. The root works deep in the earth, and spreads itself about in all ways, and to some distance. The variety of trees is not great; but the gum is that which predominates. The foliage of all is scanty, the leaves small and far apart, and such as to afford no shade in hot weather.

Abundance of timber is found fit for house-building, ship-building, and all common domestic uses, so that little of any other kind is sought after. During the last few years, ships of large burden have been built in the colony. Household furniture is made from the cedar tree, which, when polished, equals mahogany; and some of the sorts of ornamental wood are so handsome, as to be sent to England as curiosities. From its mountainous character, we are disposed to believe Van Diemen's Land to possess mineral productions; and agreeably to this, one or two of the six metals has been seen in different parts. The Government, however, having, through a spirit of narrow policy, reserved to itself the sole prerogative over any discovery of this kind, it is not probable, that such, when found upon any one's estate, will ever be made much use of. Coals have been found, and one or two mines opened: they are worked by the Government, with convict labour.

It is a singular truth in natural history, that the quadrupeds of Van Diemen's Land and New Holland are peculiar to

those parts of the world, and not found in any other country. Their curious structure must strike every one with wonder. The kangaroo, now so popularly known in England, is the largest native wild animal in the Island. It is seen bounding over all parts of the interior; and is hunted down with dogs, called kangaroo dogs, for the sake of its skin. This, when tanned, makes fine elastic leather; and is worn by all orders of the people. Its flesh is esteemed a great delicacy, and commands a high price in Hobart Town. It is cooked by mincing it up with the fat of other meat, and then steaming it.

None of the creatures of the woods are ferocious; all are diminutive, stupid, and sluggish. The snake is the only venomous reptile: the bite of it is fatal. It lies coiled up under the long grass, but is dangerous only when trodden upon.

The fish is not plentiful;* nor even so plentiful as it used to be. Oysters at one time were abundant, but they seem now to be extinct: this can be accounted for only by their being gathered at improper seasons: supplies are now sent from New South Wales. None of the fish have much flavour, but are rather insipid; it is only the smaller kinds, that have any relish. There is a species called the toad-fish, which is poisonous; its malignity being such as to cause almost immediate death.

The English, like their continental brethren, have always shown more solicitude to learn the nature of the territory they conquered or discovered, than that of its inhabitants; and therefore the Aborigines or native inhabitants of Van

* The Author of a work lately published, entitled "Six Years' Residence in the Australian Provinces," has most unaccountably declared, at page 50, the fish of Van Diemen's Land to be good and plentiful. He must have been thinking of New South Wales when he wrote this, or he could never have put such an untruth into print.

Diemen's Land, are little known to the mother country. But as an account of these people might prove interesting to my reader, and, as this work perhaps might be imperfect without it, I shall here claim his attention for a moment, while I take a glance at their former state and present condition. When the English first encroached upon the island, about two thousand of these poor savages are said to have been in possession of it.

Like every other barbarous race, they were divided into families, or tribes; each headed by its chief. Although all seemed to have sprung from a common stock, yet a great distinction had taken place among them: for those on the east spoke a different tongue from those on the west, and when brought together, the one nation could make itself understood to the other, only by signs, and gesticulations. They were sunk in the grossest barbarism, and apparently had not made one move in the progress of civilization; for they were still hunters, living by the chase. They wandered through the woods in a state of nudity; and it was only in the coldest weather that they thought of erecting a shelter. This was always of the rudest structure, being a few upright sticks, leaning together, and scantily covered with strips of bark; but as soon as the fine weather returned, the frail habitation was deserted. Their customs were those common to all savages, marked by no singularity.

Their lineaments were gross, flat, and forbidding: their colour black and sooty; and their hair, like that of the negro, short and woolly. The body was erect; the limbs muscular and well proportioned; and the gait, firm and stately.

As their subsistence was precarious, their gluttony was great. Having thrown the carcase, without any preparation, upon the fire, when but just heated, the limbs were torn asunder, and devoured voraciously.

In consequence of this they have been designated as the lowest order of human beings, removed but one shade from brutality : but I think unjustly. Their brutish way of eating was excusable ; if we bear in mind that they could never procure their food in such abundance as to afford themselves a meal when wanted. Neither, in my opinion, does the absence of any manufacture tend to justify the stigma ; for although their weapons were of the rudest description, yet these were not inferior, in point of utility, to those of many other barbarous nations. Their personal agility, and dexterity too, in wielding those weapons, went rather to prove a superiority than a want of genius, since their routine of life was so simple, and required so little ingenuity to maintain it, that their exhibiting any intellectual vivacity at all, argued the possession of a considerable amount of latent capacity.

As to the little progress they had made towards civilisation, surely nothing derogatory could be inferred from that ; for if we look around upon some of our own countrymen, we find many, that have poor pretensions to rank much above these savages. Hundreds of Irish, English, and Scotch are at the present day as wild and as ignorant as they were centuries ago.

Many persons of an inquisitive turn, have puzzled their minds to account for the origin of these people. Histories have been searched, resemblances traced, and many speculations propounded ; but, after all, no satisfactory conclusion come to. Endeavours to come to such knowledge seem to me to be idle. To ask how the native came upon the island is as ridiculous as to attempt to discover how the kangaroo came there. And climate has as little to do with the skin of the one, as it has with that of the other.

Territory can be purchased from savages for bawbles ; and I have often thought it a pity, that Europeans, instead of seizing it by violence, have never established the better policy

of obtaining it by means of such exchanges. Such a measure might inspire amity between the aborigines and the emigrants, and prevent the hostility and awful loss of life, which have always taken place after the foundation of settlements. The poor black inhabitants too, would then be enrolled as subjects of the mother country; and be protected against the unprovoked aggressions of their tyrannical invaders.

It is reasonable to believe, that the aborigines of Van Diemen's Land never, from the first settlement of the colony, viewed their new acquaintance with a kind disposition. They were forcibly dispossessed of their soil, and despoiled of their means of subsistence. The ground which was endeared to each respectively, by early associations, and in defending which they themselves had often bled, as generations of their forefathers had also done, was now at last taken by foreign usurpers.

Driven into the districts of their enemies, there to engage in fierce and bloody conflicts; or into others where there was no game, what men could have stifled their resentment or shut their eyes to their degraded condition? Would it have been surprising if the tribes had all united, and in one great confederacy sallied forth to wreak their vengeance on the heads of their cruel and insolent oppressors? But no; although the spirit might have existed it was repressed; and the poor and wronged native, stooped peaceably for a time under his sufferings. These, however, were still to be extended, for his misery was not complete. Looked upon as a mere sort of superior brute, it was deemed justifiable, and quite accordant with humanity, to doom his innocence to any treatment that could conduce to merriment, licentiousness, or interest. Hence, the grossest brutality was exercised; and the most diabolical aggressions from convict

shepherds and stock-keepers, unceasingly made upon him ; reflecting not only dishonour, but infamy, upon civilization.

In cold, and unprovoked blood, have these callous-hearted monsters frequently become his executioners, and slain both him and his family, through sport. Scores of men have been massacred, in order to get command over their women ; and sometimes neither age nor sex was spared. The warrior was struck without a cause. The child was butchered before its parents, and parents before their children. Wives were torn from their husbands ; daughters from their guardians ; and at last, whole families exterminated. The rod of oppression, however, was at length over-bent ; and the timid blacks, no longer dismayed by their white, sanguinary persecutors, roused their dormant natures, and covertly sought retaliation. When one white is struck by a blow from a savage, all the savages of the country are deemed guilty of it, and are accordingly denounced. The Colonist now ceased to compassionate their afflictions, and each aborigine in the island was looked upon as an open and rancorous enemy. Their atrocities on the whites increased daily ; and desolation was spread over the country. The traveller was way-laid and put to death ; the settler speared upon his own farm ; and the most formidable kind of insidious warfare was in constant operation.

Gaining wisdom from each encounter, they soon became better aware how to harass the country with their incursions ; and shortly proceeded to the plundering of farm-houses, and burning of stacks, until at last the colony seemed consigned to unavoidable destruction.

Although by this time there were many detachments of both soldiers and settlers in pursuit of the enemy, yet, by means of his superior adroitness, in eluding their designs,

their attempts constantly failed, and their expeditions issued only in additional vexation and loss.

Things growing desperate, a bold undertaking was projected, and this was to endeavour to encircle the whole of the aborigines, by means of all the inhabitants uniting, and forming a line right across the country; then, marching forward simultaneously, and closing as they advanced, the extremities of the line meeting at a peninsula, wherein it was supposed the whole band of aborigines would be captured. The idea was romantic, and over the craggy and irregular surface of Van Diemen's Land, its practicability doubtful. However, it was attempted; and though conducted with much spirit, zeal, and promptitude, it miscarried. One native only was captured, and he afterwards escaped: the undertaking costing the colony thirty thousand pounds!

A man now arose, named Robinson, of mean address, and apparently of poor pretensions. He presented himself to the Government, and stated his confidence in his own ability to win over the whole of the aborigines. His propositions were heard, and finally agreed upon; and, being provided with a small chosen band of colleagues, he was, without loss of time, despatched on his expedition.

His efforts proved successful; and he achieved what he undertook. He imposed upon the easy confidence of his sable brethren, and captured them by stratagem. When first meeting with them, he instantly threw down his defensive armour before them, and accosted them as his friends. What oppression had long failed to do, kindness now at once did; for, confiding in his generous professions, they rallied round him, and became his peaceful companions. He came upon each tribe successively, and as every succeeding one followed the example of its predecessor, he soon collected their scattered population. Having soothed them by blan-

dishments, magnified their prospects, covered them with caresses, and poured into their ears many false promises, he wheedled the whole nation with him into Hobart Town, and there delivered them up to the Government. Their number had wofully diminished. From being formidable, they had become insignificant; for one hundred and fifty-three souls formed now the little remnant of their race. These, then, it was thought advisable to transport away from Van Diemen's Land to an island in Bass's Strait; and here they have continued in confinement ever since. Whether it be that their new habitation has been uncongenial, or that they have repined for the loss of their country, it is hard to determine; but certain it is, that their banishment has caused a great diminution in their numbers; for out of the one hundred and fifty-three who left Van Diemen's Land, in the year 1830, only eighty individuals now survive: and we may, from present appearances, predict the final extinction, within a short time, of this once simple, unoffending, and interesting people.*

* An order has been issued by the home Government for their removal to Port Philip on New Holland. The intention which has prompted to this change is praiseworthy, but its effects, I apprehend, will be injurious.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE CLIMATE, ITS GENERAL CHARACTER, AND EFFECTS.

HAVING said all that I think necessary, with respect to the native productions of the soil, and its inhabitants, I shall now proceed to treat of the climate. And as correct knowledge concerning this, is most important to those, who wish to visit the colony, I shall be rather particular in my description.

When a stranger desires to learn the nature of a climate which he has never felt, he commonly has recourse to a map ; and by there finding the position of the country, or its distance from the equator, thinks that he has got the proper clue to accurate information. But this clue is often deceptive ; many things conspiring to make it so. The elevation of the land ; the inequalities of its surface ; the humidity, or aridity of its soil ; its contiguity to the ocean ; the size of its rivers ; or its want of any ; and a variety of other causes, all tend to influence the temperature of the climate, often more, than its mere nearness to, or distance from, the line.

However, Van Diemen's Land lies in $146^{\circ} 50'$ East longitude, and in $43^{\circ} 40'$ South latitude.

As England is on an opposite point of the globe, the days, the nights, and the seasons, take place in each at contrary periods. Thus, while in England we shut our windows and doors on the frost, and sit down to our joyous Christmas dinner ; they in Van Diemen's Land have to throw all open, and, in compliment to an ancient custom, endeavour to partake of the unseasonable fare, of roast beef, and plum-pudding.

Although the seasons perform the same revolutions as in England, yet their effect upon ourselves, is quite different ;

for instead of that quiet, undeviating return of weather which we experience at home ; in Van Diemen's Land there is nothing but capricious variability. The seasons, with respect to their temperature, seem to be confounded : and the cold in summer, is sometimes as keen as it is in winter. But the most fickle months are those of summer. Then the weather changes day after day ; and often, hour after hour ; not only by slight degrees, but frequently, to great extremes. Those changes are at times so sudden in Hobart Town, as that, in going up one street, you could throw off your coat, and in coming down the next, you might put on an additional one. The mornings and evenings are always chilly ; and it is not unusual, even after a hot day, to require a fire before night. The winds blow in gusts, and sometimes violently. Hot winds are felt in the summer, of an oppressive nature, seeming as if they were issuing from an oven. Their duration, however, is short ; they last but for two or three days in the hottest months ; and continue each day but for a few hours. In this respect, Van Diemen's Land has a great advantage over New South Wales, as these hot winds last longer there, and take place oftener.

The winter in Van Diemen's Land is cold and biting ; but never frosty. Snow falls heavy ; but ice is never seen. Rain is commonly accompanied with an open rawness in the air, and continues pouring for days together ; often overflowing the rivulets, and doing great mischief. The thermometer ranges in winter, in the sun, as low as 40° ; and in summer, as high as 130° . The atmosphere is always pure, and in summer, clear and delightful.

From what I have said respecting the variability of the climate, perhaps it may be thought by my reader to be unhealthy. But such it is not. In spite of its uncertainty, no climate in the world is more healthy. Sudden transitions

of weather are not agreeable; neither can they conduce to the vigor of the body; yet, in Van Diemen's Land, they seem to produce no serious complaints. Colds are caught, and unless these be attended to, they may prove fatal. But this is no peculiarity; for such is the case in all climates.

Lingering illness is seldom heard of in Van Diemen's Land; and in consequence, the deaths always seem to be sudden. I once asked an experienced physician the cause of the many sudden deaths in the island; "intemperance and negligence," said he. His opinion, however, might not be sound. These seeming sudden deaths may contribute to the praise of the climate; for they may prove its salutary influence, by sustaining the body in health, longer there, than in the climate of another country.

The people are all healthy; and afflicted by no annual epidemical visitations. The native-born inhabitants reach maturity much sooner than the English; all the kinds of vegetation flourish; and on the whole, from many years experience, I can aver, that few climates in the world are finer, in every respect, than that of Van Diemen's Land.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE LEGISLATURE, AND GOVERNMENT OF THE COLONY.

IN the foregoing pages I hope that I have placed before my reader's mind as good a picture of the natural features of the colony, as could well be found without a personal visit to it. I shall now take him with me, as it were, into the colony; and show him the people who inhabit it; and the channels

that are open for the exercise of their industry. But before I engage in these two subjects, a primary one presents itself, and must be discussed,—namely, the genius of the scheme of government.

As to such knowledge, most people are indifferent; the Governments of all British colonies being supposed to be alike: that is, that all are regulated by British laws, and governed by the British constitution. But, as the Governments of all British colonies are not alike, nor regulated always by British laws, I deem it of importance to point out exactly the peculiarities of that one about which we are speaking.

New colonies are commonly founded in order to relieve the mother country of a surplus population. Van Diemen's Land, however, was founded upon a different motive.

In the year 1803, it was established as a gaol, or penal settlement, for the sister colony of New South Wales; and remained as such till about the year 1817, when her claims to elevation into a free colony being brought before Parliament, her shores were opened for the admission of emigrants. Her land then came to be granted, and other advantages proffered, in order to induce free persons to emigrate. Although the character of the colony was thus nominally altered, it was not essentially changed; for it still remained a penal settlement, not only for New South Wales, but likewise for the mother country: in which state it yet continues.

According to the present laws of prison discipline, the convicts in the colony are, to all appearance, confounded with the free inhabitants. To govern such a heterogeneous intermixture of people well, certain regulations must be adopted, not only different from, but often repugnant to, those which would be thought of in other states of society.

The local Government is quite dependent upon the mother country ; her interest must be studied, and she afterwards consulted, in every public measure which passes in the colony. The local Government is constituted so as to bear a semblance to the British constitution ; but it is a semblance only, and nothing more.

A Governor presides over the colony, to represent the Queen ; aided by two Councils, the one executive, the other legislative. The functions of the executive are supposed to be the same with those of the privy council at home ; and those of the legislative, analogous to the functions of the House of Commons. The business of the executive is, to advise the Governor, whenever he requires it ; and that of the legislative, to enact local laws.

The judicature is composed of a Supreme Court, of Courts of Quarter Sessions, and Courts of Requests, which last are sometimes called Courts of Conscience, and hold jurisdiction over claims to the extent of ten pounds. The whole is protected and subserved by a strong and efficient police.

All Governors of British colonies are invested with large authority ; but the power of some is greater than that of others. Few, however, have such great command as those who preside over penal settlements ; and that of the Governor of Van Diemen's Land may be said to exceed any other ; for, although the servant of the British Government, being placed at so great a distance from its seat, its authority can have little influence over his will. He can administer the affairs of the colony in what way he deems proper, and wield the sceptre of his office, without regard to the wishes or acquiescence of the colonists. Most men try to extend their sway, but none to curtail it ; and therefore it must not be thought remarkable if the free inhabitants of

Van Diemen's Land have often had grievances to complain of.

The executive council is composed of five members, each of whom have seats likewise in the legislative council.

In the legislative council there are but fifteen members. All are appointed by the Crown, and each can be removed at the Governor's pleasure, with the sanction of the Queen. Seven of these are Government officers, and seven private gentlemen. The Governor presides, and makes the fifteenth member. He is the only person who is authorized to bring an act before the council. He has the intention of the act first gazetted, and then submits it in person to their notice. At its third reading it is adopted; and there is no act on record, which, when once introduced, was ever so opposed as to be thrown out.

This council is empowered to alter or abrogate British laws, and to enact others of its own framing. Such, however, must afterwards be sent to England for the sanction of the Crown: still, they remain in force until its pleasure is known, and twelve months at least must elapse before the answer arrives. The official members must always be in attendance; with the honorary, it is optional.

When we consider the discretionary power of the Governor, and the extraordinary constitution of the Legislature, we have no alternative, but to denominate the subjects of Van Diemen's Land "subjects of a despotic Government," without the right of suffrage in the election of their Legislature, and without a voice in the distribution of the revenue, what are the mis-termed free inhabitants of the colony but mere slaves of arbitrary dominion?

It is too much to suppose, that any man who sits in the council, is qualified to sit there, or is the man, whom the people would have chosen, had they the right of choice. He

may be a man of opulence, and of probity too ; but yet be void of talent, void of knowledge, and void of experience. His vote must always be somewhat influenced by that of the Governor, for it is to him he ascribes his elevation, and through him that he retains his dignity.

The form of the judicial department is unpopular, and its fees are still more so. Two Judges preside over the Supreme Court, and the functions of Grand Jury, and Attorney-General, are consolidated in one person. All criminal causes are tried by a jury of seven military officers, and it is needless to say, that this jury has always been exceedingly obnoxious to the free inhabitants. Its decisions, however, are generally faultless. The liberties of small communities may often be better preserved by a military, than a civil jury. In such a community, the latter can scarcely avoid being influenced by rumour, beforehand, and the case is adjudged often before they are empannelled. But not so with the former ; for, being confined to their own circle alone, they are always strangers to the cause before they enter the court ; and can therefore give their judgment, with open freedom, and with an unbiassed spirit. Still, we must recollect, that the profession of arms is incompatible with the knowledge of civil affairs, and incompatible, too, with the rights of British subjects.

The fees of the courts are enormous ; and are rendered intolerable by the vexatious demands and exactions of many unprincipled practitioners. The abusive charges, even gross frauds, of some of these long-headed gentlemen, have been such as to reflect not only odium upon their profession, but disgrace upon their country. Some have grown to be very wealthy by their rapacity, careless of the ruin they have scattered through the island.

The colony is divided into two counties, and subdivided

into districts. Over each district is appointed a magistrate, and a body of police. The stipendiary magistrates are commonly military officers of the garrison, and the post being in the patronage of the governor, it is often inadequately filled.

The constabulary I shall have occasion to speak of, when I come to the subject of prison discipline; I shall now only observe, that although this force is unpopular with the free people, no other force could be found in the colony, so admirably adapted to preserve its peace and order; and that, until prison discipline be reformed, such a force must be retained.

The Church of England is the dominant church; education of the lower classes is encouraged; and many useful institutions are in existence and well maintained.

It is said, that the mother country does more for her colonies than they do for her; that, when she protects them by paying their military, they ought not to murmur at having to pay her for their civil establishments; and that to expect her to contribute anything towards this local expenditure, would be unfair and unreasonable. This reasoning being plausible, the colonists, although, as I have shown, not represented in the legislature, consent to the taxation; and make up the revenue accordingly.

Adam Smith, in his "Wealth of Nations," in speaking of the moderate rate of colonial taxation in his day, says, "The expenses of the civil establishment of Massachusetts Bay, before the commencement of the present disturbances, used to be only about 18,000*l.* a-year; that of New-Hampshire and Rhode Island, 3500*l.* each; that of Connecticut, 4000*l.*; that of New-York and Pennsylvania, 4500*l.* each; that of New-Jersey, 1200*l.*; that of Virginia and South Carolina, 8000*l.* each. The civil establishment of Nova Scotia and Georgia, are partly supported by an annual grant of Parlia-

ment ; but Nova Scotia pays besides, about 7000*l.* a-year towards the public expenses of the Colony, and Georgia about 2500*l.* a-year. All the different establishments in North America, in short, exclusive of those of Maryland and North Carolina, of which no exact account has been got, did not before the commencement of the present disturbances, cost the inhabitants above 64,700*l.* a-year ; an ever memorable example, at how small an expense three millions of people may not only be governed but well governed." Such is Adam Smith's summary of colonial taxation in his day ; and such his eulogium, on the then good economy of government ; but were Adam Smith living now, instead of complimenting government for its frugality, he would doubtless censure it for its profuseness and bad management. If we are to believe what he tells us, (and his uniform correctness and veracity, must remove the least misgiving as to what he tells us,) the contrast, between the taxation in the little colony of Van Diemen's Land, and that of all the colonies of North America together, (exclusive of the two as above,) before the period of the revolution, is not only astonishing, but astounding.

According to the last returns, it appears that the population of Van Diemen's Land amounts to 41,512 souls. It is supposed, however, to be 45,000. At any rate 23,244 is the sum returned of the free inhabitants. And the revenue, which this small population of 23,244 people pay to support their civil establishment, is upwards of 100,000*l.* a-year. Three millions of people in North America paid but 64,700*l.* a-year, while only 23,244 people, in Van Diemen's Land have to pay the enormous sum of upwards of one hundred thousand pounds a-year !

What a prosperous country, then ! exclaims my reader, to be able to pay such a large revenue ; and to require such a

prodigious establishment ! As to its prosperity, he shall hear about that by-and-bye ; and as to its ability to contribute such a revenue, I need only say, that, in order to raise it, most illiberal measures have had to be enforced : as, for instance, distillation has been recently prohibited ; and the colonists are no longer permitted to drink spirits of their own manufacture, but must drink that alone, which they can afford to import, and for which they can afford to pay duty.

The revenue is drawn from four sources ; from the levying of fines ; the exacting of fees ; the granting of licenses ; and the laying of imposts on imported commodities.

Having said all that seems necessary on the subject of local government, I shall now proceed to explain how prison discipline is conducted ; and to show the condition of the convict after transportation.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONDITION OF THE CONVICT, AND REGULATIONS OF PRISON DISCIPLINE.

CONVICTS arrive in what are called convict-ships ; under the command and superintendence of a surgeon. The expense of the voyage is paid by the British Government. On the subsequent morning, the Governor and his retinue go on board, and receive the transfer of the convicts : with all the papers respecting them. The surgeon then delivers a history of the conduct of each, during the voyage. This business being finished, and a minute description of each prisoner taken, and recorded, the Governor begins a lecture to them on their new condition. He lays before them their prospects

in the colony; and with solemnity impresses upon their minds the inevitably great punishment that will be inflicted for the least departure from rectitude of behaviour. Having excited their fears, he then attempts the raising of their hopes, and inspiring of them with good resolutions. He recites the scale of rewards for deserving conduct, and urges all to endeavour to merit those rewards, by reforming their lives, and becoming regenerate beings. When landed, they are marched in custody to a barrack, where they are confined.

Convict discipline in Van Diemen's Land, is a great party question with the colonists. Some are friendly towards its present regulations, and adverse to any change; while others view those regulations with bitterness, and advocate their reformation with fervor. Each party inveighs against the other, and truth is lost in the clamour of disputation. The minds of strangers with respect to the subject, instead of being enlightened, are perplexed; and the knowledge of the simple regulations of convict discipline is involved in error, misconception, and obscurity.

I shall endeavour, as well and briefly as I can, to draw aside the veil, and exhibit those regulations in their true light.

All convicts upon their arrival are made servants of, either to the Government, or to private persons. When in the service of a private person, they are said to be assigned to him. In order to procure a convict servant, the person applies to a Board, called the Assignment Board, and states the sort of servant which he wants; and if such a one be upon the list for assignment, the applicant gets him. The man is provided with a grey jacket, a pair of grey trowsers, a shirt, and a pair of boots; for all which the master pays the Government one guinea. No information is given as to the crime of the convict, and the master is never solicitous

to hear of it. The latter receives his man with the same feeling with which he would a horse or an ox. He views him as a piece of locomotive machinery, that he is to set in motion, and to draw a profit from. The master's control over the convict, is absolute. He must not strike him; but for the least neglect, the slightest show of insolence, a surly look, a hasty expression, or for any behaviour which betokens disrespect, or that is repugnant to the most slavish submission, he is expected to have him punished. He takes him before a magistrate, to whom he complains, and the convict is chastised. The rigor of the chastisement is sharpened, at every repetition of offence; and flogging is the punishment which is commonly inflicted. Unless the master were invested with such peremptory authority, he could never enforce his commands; nor would the condition of the convict be different from that of a free person. But while the law thus protects the master, it neglects not to protect the convict likewise. The master is not only forbidden to strike his servants, but also to have any, unless he provide them with a proper maintenance. Regulations are therefore enacted, fixing a scale of rations and clothing. If the master infract any of those regulations, the convict must complain to the Government of such infraction; and if such be proved to be true, the master forfeits all his servants. Convicts, ever discontented with their situations, never relax their vigilance over these rights; and if they fancy they have caught their master in curtailing them, they instantly fly before a magistrate, and complain. But magistrates listen to such complaints always with suspicion, and unless they be verified by collateral evidence, dismiss them instantly, and punish the complainant.

Masters are forbidden to pay their convicts wages; but, notwithstanding this prohibition, many do pay them wages:

the Government, however, pretends to be ignorant of it. The encouragements extended to convicts, as rewards for good conduct, are abatements in the periods of their servitude. Those abatements are granted successively, as they come to be merited. The first enlargement is termed a "ticket-of-leave." This is a document from the Governor, conferring on the convict the liberty to exercise his industry, within the colony of Van Diemen's Land, in an honest and proper way, for his own advantage. This can be acquired only after a settled time of service, and at the recommendation of the master. If the convict has been transported under a long sentence, and, by a course of unblemished conduct, has preserved his ticket-of-leave, he can, at a stated future period, petition for his emancipation. He is then disenthralled, and becomes a free man in the colony. If he be transported for life, he can again petition for what is called a free pardon; be restored to liberty; and granted permission to return to his native country.

Of each of these indulgences, the ticket-of-leave is the only one which is precarious; for it can be taken away for the slightest fault. Being seen intoxicated; or in the streets after eight o'clock at night; neglecting to attend a place of worship; insolence to free people; extortion; or the doing of any thing which is injurious to society, brings down upon the possessor the immediate forfeiture of his ticket-of-leave.

One master treats his servant very differently from what another does. One will maintain his convicts upon the regulated scale of rations and clothing; weighing out their daily food, and clothing them, just as the Government has ordered them to be clothed. Others adopt the contrary course, and allow them to eat and drink without restraint; giving them apparel too, always when it is wanted. In each of these cases, however, the masters act from one motive; that of

promoting their own interest. A regard for the comfort of the convict seldom influences the conduct of either. The one says, feed and clothe the convict ever so well, the produce of his labor is the same: kindness will never augment this produce, but severity may. But, unless I well feed my oxen, says the other, they cannot toil; and it must be the same with my convicts: when I curtail their comforts, I sacrifice my own advantage.

By such treatment from either master, the convict's happiness or misery is often little affected. He sees through the motive, and estimates his condition accordingly. Happiness or misery is neither in the belly, nor on the back, but in the mind. We can afflict both the former, and yet, perhaps, not disturb the latter: we can pamper and cherish those, too, and be at the same time excruciating this. The prospects of the convict in assigned service are uncertain; for they depend wholly upon the disposition of the master. If he be a disciple of the modern school of philanthropy, transportation, as respects his servants, ceases to be a punishment. He can convert it even into a reward for crime, by making their condition better than it would have been before. If, on the other hand, he be a morose, domineering tyrant, elated with his power, and ever anxious to show it, they may be made to suffer ten thousand times the punishment they deserve. Through lenity, or mistaken humanity of masters, have convicts of depraved habits and unreformed lives, obtained improper indulgences; and through the barbarity and swaggering tyranny of others, has many a broken-hearted assigned servant been driven to reckless desperation, and terminated his days upon the gallows.

The condition of those who are assigned in town, is superior, generally, to that of those who are assigned in the country. He that is assigned in the country, is commonly

employed upon a farm, and has therefore to work constantly from sun-rise to sun-set, under the eye of his master or overseer. His labour is his master's profit, consequently the least idleness is forbidden. But the convict who is assigned in town, being commonly a domestic servant, in the occupation of a messenger, an ostler, a coachman, or cook, has more liberty; his duties are light, and his advantages many. He gets wages, always greater than the value of his labour, and his situation is often better than that of a free emigrant.

But though his situation be, in some respects, superior to that of the free emigrant, it must not be presumed that his happiness is equal. The convict who is assigned in town, is on a constant stretch of uneasy apprehension. He is not only under the eye of his master, but under that of the government, under that of the police, and under that of every free person about him. He must not be seen out after eight o'clock in the evening without a pass from his master. If he be brought before a magistrate, and convicted of the most trivial offence, that offence is recorded, and debars him from indulgence afterwards. One would suppose that his mind was always under punishment; for his slavish condition must be ever in his thoughts. Constrained labour is always irksome; and a shilling earned voluntarily is sweeter than a pound procured otherwise,—the gentlest slavery being painful, and no mind easy under it.

I shall now subjoin a specimen of the description of punishment inflicted for offences:

For absconding,—Sentence of transportation, extended for a longer period.

Being absent without a master's permission, or disobedience of orders,—Worked in chains on the roads.

For insubordination,—Transported away to another penal settlement, where the punishment is unknown.

For drunkenness,—Confinement in a cell.

For idleness or insolence,—Flogging.

The female convict is confined in a house of correction, until assigned out to service. If she misbehave while in service, she is sent back, and confined again in this house of correction. She views the punishment with a degree of indifference—and there are from three to four hundred women commonly under this confinement. She is assigned only to her own sex. When applied for, she is brought out with others, and all, like cattle, arranged before the applicant. When selected, she is sent home to her employment, under the charge of a constable.

Her condition, in assigned service, is parallel to that of the male's—all depending upon the disposition of her mistress. She must not be stricken, but if she offend she must be taken, like the man, before a magistrate, and there punished. If she remain for twelve months in one service, and during that period occasion no complaint, she, if she meets with a partner, can petition the governor for a license to be married. When married, she is assigned to her husband, and becomes, to all intents and purposes, a free-woman. If she cannot meet with a partner, she has all the other indulgences open to her for good conduct, which are open to the male convict.

Most of the convicts are of depraved habits—outcasts from society, and accustomed to a life of idleness. There are none, however, of either sex, I believe, when they hear of their prospects in the colony, but resolve to reform. But the temptations, particularly in town, which encircle assigned service, are so numerous and strong, as to cause those resolutions too frequently to be renounced, and involve the convict sometimes in deeper guilt than ever.

I find, by a calculation which I have made, from a public return of the number of convicts who have obtained indul-

gences, that, of the men, only one in four does so, and of the women, only one in seven.

Although implacable aversion is always borne by the virtuous woman, towards those of her own sex who have dishonoured their reputation, yet many mistresses in Van Diemen's Land forego this feeling, and use the kindest efforts to inspire morality, and produce amendment, but it is of little avail; for temptation after temptation defeats almost all such efforts. The love of fine attire is common to most women, but particularly to a certain order; and their ardour to obtain it produces most of their crimes and misfortunes. It is an evil then, and a great evil, in female convict discipline in Van Diemen's Land, to allow the female convict to deck herself out, and adorn her person in the style that suits her fancy. It is true that the mistress can restrain this liberty, but every mistress does not restrain it, and some even encourage it, thinking that it tends to make their establishment look wealthy and respectable. By such means it is that the intention of transportation is frustrated, for it has the effect of tempting to pilfer, and of thus casting the woman back into habits of depravity. Convicts, in any situation in the colony, ought to be marked, so as to make known to the free person that they are convicts. To release themselves from such a notorious stigma, would be as great a stimulus to good conduct as any of the rewards which are now offered. As it is, all the convicts in assigned service are suffered, with the permission of the master or mistress, to dress as they please, and thereby commingle and confound themselves with the free people.

Few of the female convicts stay any length of time in one service; temptation break down the firmness of resolution; and mistresses are for ever looking for new servants.

There are about four thousand male convicts in assigned

service; the rest are employed by the Government in a variety of ways, as clerks, messengers, artificers, and constables, while those who are under particular punishment are employed upon the roads.

It is a principle in prison discipline in Van Diemen's Land, to fix the convict in the occupation to which he has been bred; and whether the Government retains him, or he is sent to a private master, this principle is never neglected.

It appears to me, however, to be a bad one. The mind is easy while it is engaged in that business to which it is accustomed; but uneasy when engaged in that which is unknown to it. It is easy, too, while in accustomed society; but uneasy, when in society that is the contrary. If bred in a town, we desire to remain in a town; and if in the country, to be in the country. The educated convict from a city is happier engaged as a clerk in a Government office, than if assigned upon a farm in the country; and the husbandman is happier employed upon a farm, than as a house-servant or messenger in town.

Were I to search for a fact to astonish my reader, I could not, I am sure, find one better calculated to do so than this;—"that the constabulary of Van Diemen's Land, is chiefly composed of transported felons from England; and those, too, of the most abandoned characters!" About three hundred of such fellows are scattered over the colony, armed as peace officers, and invested with power both positive and discretionary, superior to that of the constabulary of the mother country. The former can enter a private house; or apprehend free persons, upon his suspicion of their being convicts, without a warrant from a magistrate. Many are chosen for constables, out of the prison ship, immediately on its arrival; and few of them are holding any indulgence for former good conduct.

It is unnecessary for me to observe, that these convict constables are very obnoxious to the free inhabitants. The idea that a transported felon has jurisdiction over free British emigrants, is not only repugnant, but revolting, to the pride of an Englishman. It is looked upon as an insult, gross, and ignominious ; and the free inhabitants are unceasing in their clamours for its removal. But their voices are not listened to. They have no influence upon the wise policy of the local government ; and as long as convicts are allotted as servants to the free inhabitants, they must not repine at having to endure the sight of these convict constables. The proverb, "Set a thief to catch a thief," is here practically acted upon, and also found to work well ; for before the making of constables of the convicts was adopted, plunder, violence, and crime, prevailed in every corner of the island. But since this force has been organized, the state of things in these respects has changed : plunder is rare, violence is almost unknown, and every life is protected. In no country in the world can you travel with less apprehension of danger than in Van Diemen's Land ; and such is the repose of society, that few people deem it necessary to secure their houses by lock and key. Therefore, until assignment be abolished, a convict constabulary must be maintained.

It is not until the male convict has committed an offence in the colony, that the rigours of transportation are made known to him. Once sentenced to a chain gang, he then feels the miseries of his condition. Clad in a yellow jacket and trousers, or both patched over with an intermixture of yellow and blue, like the garb of a harlequin ; loaded with heavy irons, fastened round his ankles, clanking with every motion of his body ; put to laborious work, and kept at it from sun rise to sun set, with a scanty allowance of food, scarcely enough to keep body and soul together ; and for

the least offence, bound up to the triangles, and flogged barbarously before all his companions,—he experiences degrees of punishment, which he never afterwards forgets.

If there be any fault in this branch of convict discipline, it is that of the contamination which is caused by mixing the petty offender with the hardened villain in one companionship. As, however, contamination can take place only by the use of speech, the silent system, as adopted in America, might obviate the consequences to which I allude.

The incorrigible offenders are re-transported to a penal settlement, away from the settled districts, named Port Arthur. As visitors are not allowed admission upon this settlement, we are unable to give the details of the discipline exercised there. By its effects, however, upon the minds and conduct of those unfortunate beings who have suffered from its rigours, we may judge it to be tremendous. The place seems to be a terrestrial purgatory. The men are often driven to the commission of suicide, — many to that of murder, in order, as they have afterwards declared, to be brought to Hobart Town and hanged.

Boys are transported to Van Diemen's Land, and immediately on their arrival are sent to Port Arthur, where they are kept together, educated, and taught useful trades. When at a proper age, they are sent to Hobart Town, and assigned out to masters.

Vessels of large burden are built at this settlement, and sold afterwards to the public. These vessels are said never to pay the cost of building them. Even if they did, it seems ungenerous in the Government to turn the labour of the convict against that of the free emigrant.

CHAPTER VI.

HOBART TOWN DESCRIBED, AND THE GENERAL CHARACTER
OF THE FREE INHABITANTS.

HAVING done with the two subjects of the Government, and prison discipline of the colony, we now come to speak of the free inhabitants, together with their habits and means of subsistence. Upon each of these we shall have to dilate diffusively ; but before entering upon them, let us glance at the colony's advancement, from the period of its foundation.

Van Diemen's Land was colonised in the year 1803. It was then a wilderness. Within so short a time as thirty-six years, little, it might be supposed, could be achieved, towards reclaiming its wildness, and making it a fit residence, not only for a civilized, but a polished, European society. Such an achievement, however, has been completed. Few men will repose in idleness while they see a prospect of becoming wealthy, by exercising their industry : and all emigrants desire to be wealthy. Big with expectation, they quit their country ; and as soon as possible after their arrival, put their several schemes in operation. A project that at home would be derided, is, in a new colony, applauded. What in the one place would be viewed as impracticable, is in the other admired as both practicable and laudable. The emigrant, in quitting his country, often quits its prejudices ; but well would it be, if at the same time he never quitted its prudence. His fancy too frequently takes the place of his judgment, and betrays him into acts of foolishness and presumption. As he thinks he is rapidly to accumulate wealth, every speculation seems reasonable to him ; and hence the hasty, and dazzling

rise of infant colonies. Houses are built before they are wanted ; and luxuries bought before they can be paid for. It is not then surprising that what was once a forest should soon come to be a city, and that within so short a time as thirty-six years, a wilderness has been reclaimed, and made such as I have already in part described Van Diemen's Land to be.

Nothing astonishes one more upon his arrival in Van Diemen's Land, than the aspect of its beautiful little capital of Hobart Town. He views with wonder and admiration its commodious harbour ; its extensive, well-constructed wharf, where vessels of all tonnage can lie close to, and discharge or take in their cargoes with ease and conveniency ; together with the range of large and heavy buildings encircling it.

The town is built upon an undulating surface, receding from a cove on the left of the Derwent. Seen from the water, it seems to run up before you on a variety of ascents, and to spread itself abroad upon the hills in the distance. Mount Wellington, a great mountain, which during nine months in the year is capped with snow, and which rises four thousand feet above the level of the sea, stands at the back, in darkness and sublimity, and overlooks the surrounding scenery.

The town is laid out with judgment. There are about twenty streets, all wide, and dividing or intersecting one another at right angles. A narrow and shallow rivulet, which takes its rise from Mount Wellington, flows through the town, and affords the inhabitants their only supply of fresh water. All the streets are macadamized, and none are flagged. The passengers confine themselves to no particular parts, but walk as often in the centre of the street as on either side. The public buildings are few, and all of the

simplest architecture. The houses bear no common aspect. Some are of brick, others of stone ; but all, instead of being slated, are roofed with shingles (thin boards, in the shape of slates). As every proprietor has been guided by his own taste in the structure of his house, few are built alike or upon the same plan ; and as he was not restrained by the Government to a settled line, they are planted too often in zig-zag positions. The town covers a great deal of ground ; but little of it, after all, is built upon. A tree is seen sometimes standing in the midst of houses, and a house often in the midst of trees. Dwellings having been erected long before the streets were made, and the town being upon a very irregular surface, some of the buildings in consequence now occupy very awkward situations. On one side of a street, they are often elevated much above the level ; while, on the other, they are sunk considerably beneath it.

Shops are scattered all over Hobart Town ; but the business thoroughfare is confined to two streets. Retail spirits stores are numerous, and are seen in every direction : stand at the corner of any street, and from fifteen to twenty are in sight. It is not because the selling of spirits is so profitable, but because few channels are open for the investment of little capitals. One or two tanneries, a few breweries, and candle manufactories, are all the manufacturing establishments in the colony.

Some of the shops are showy and respectable, even tasteful and elegant ; displaying an appearance equal to that of many in London. Owing to the competition which has taken place during the last few years among them, the same sort of efforts are now made to catch the eye and entice customers that are made in the cities of Europe. The householder is as particular in the decorating of the interior of his house as he would were he in England ; and hence his furni-

ture is not inferior to that of those of his own rank in the mother country.

It must be borne in mind, that the society of Van Diemen's Land is an English society. But as you travel through the United Kingdom, you perceive local peculiarities distinguishing the inhabitants of each part of it, which in Van Diemen's Land you do not; for as emigration has flowed from all of these parts respectively, those peculiarities are lost in the general admixture of dialects; and therefore no distinctions remain.

Few emigrate who enjoy prosperity at home. It is necessity chiefly that moves a man to seek a new home in a distant colony. When, at home, he is not successful in his calling, he ascribes it to the state of the country, and accordingly makes up his mind to quit it. The man of intemperance, whose habits have destroyed his prospects; views his condition through a mistaken medium, and grows disgusted with his residence. The prodigal and the gambler, who have been made bankrupts by their own excesses, do the same; and the idler, and the unskilful artizan, abuse their birth-place because they have not had the felicity of becoming as wealthy as their neighbours. New colonies have always been a refuge for such persons; and Van Diemen's Land has had its share of them. Intemperance, prodigality, and idleness, have therefore been planting themselves in the island; and have at last so spread over society, as to render it too likely that even the virtuous man may in time become a gambler or drunkard, or a libertine.

Parents and guardians, to punish a wayward disposition, or reform the dissipated habits of youth, often send them out to the colonies; but where is the youth that ever came back amended? He has some regard for his own reputation, and for the respectability of his family, while living with them at

home ; but loses both when away in a foreign land, unnoticed and unknown. The society of Van Diemen's Land is not adapted to remove dissolute propensities, and it would be well for it, and all other colonies, if those who have contracted them would cease to emigrate thither.

The greater portion of the free population emigrated under the idea of becoming in time wealthy colonists ; and this idea still possesses them, proving a lasting torment to their minds. Money is the grand topic of conversation, and to appear wealthy is their greatest ambition. In no part of the world are riches more honoured than in Van Diemen's Land. It is no matter how you became possessed of them, what is your history, or what your propensities ; if you can make it appear that you are a man of property, you are everything ; your company is courted ; your name blazoned abroad ; and your consequence acknowledged and bowed to. But, alas ! be without money, and lo ! you are trampled upon. De-meanour, probity, or talents, may procure you friends among your countrymen at home ; but not one of these can, if you be indigent, gain you a friend among your countrymen in Van Diemen's Land. Such being the predominant spirit of the people, every man desires to seem better off than his neighbour, and this foolish emulation has betrayed the society into most ridiculous habits of showy profusion and extravagance. Many will forego domestic comforts, to keep a horse or drive a vehicle ; and street parade, and public ostentation, are the sole objects of study, of envy, and of admiration. A sordid mind ruins the better feelings of the heart ; evil dispositions play around it, and embitter the cup of prosperity. The society of Van Diemen's Land is split into parties, jealous, arrogant, and rancorous towards one another. Sociality enters into no circle ; friendship is seldom formed ;

every house is a hermitage ; and company is found only in the tavern, or at the billiard-table.

As most men love distinction, and as it can be easily acquired in small communities, it must not be thought strange if there be few, of any influence in Van Diemen's Land, that do not make it their constant endeavour to draw upon themselves public notice. Every man seems to affect a superiority ; and false pretensions and assumption are prevailing characteristics. Jealous of their rank, all are careful not to associate with those who are deemed to be inferior. Distinctions are therefore made by each person, and sedulously observed. The man in a public office thinks, or pretends to think, those who are engaged in trade plebeians, with whom to keep company would be degrading. The man of trade looks upon these creatures with derision, and terms them, in contempt, the aristocracy. Yet, he seems proud if recognised by any of them, and is for ever showing his mortification at the Governor's partiality in not equalising both orders, and inviting each alike to his table, and festivities. A few of the wealthy of the order, whom this ephemeral aristocracy discard, are the greatest disturbers of the peace of society. They boast, they swagger, they vociferate ; and their upstart pride and ridiculous pretensions are extremely amusing to those who can view precedency in a proper light. Some are even contemptible ; for while they affect to despise the presumption of the man in office, they themselves are the most presumptuous and supercilious by far. Ignorant pride is the bane of Van Diemen's Land. Citizens became emigrants, instead of husbandmen ; and have diffused a spirit of display, of indolence, and profusion, ruinous to sober manly industry.

The British public have often been told how cheaply a family can maintain itself in Van Diemen's Land ; but such accounts, I am sorry to have to say, are fabulous. Mutton

and beef average throughout the year from six-pence to ten-pence per lb.; bread is always at about the same rate as in England; poultry is scarce and dear; and in short nothing of household consumption is ever at a remarkably low price.

Neither are domestic expenses lessened, but the contrary, by having convict servants; for while one servant is enough in a small family in England, two or three convict servants are necessary in such a one in Van Diemen's Land. Cheap living, therefore, is unknown in the colony.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMMON STATE OF HUSBANDRY IN VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

HAVING finished the history of the character and habits of the free colonists, it remains for me to detail their means of subsistence. Since the erection of Van Diemen's Land into a colony, others have been founded, but none of them have retained the name that it still does. Its features continue to be objects of admiration; and its shores are still pointed to for their riches and prosperity. But the propensity to exaggerate has led many to ascribe more of these to its share, than nature has endowed it with. It possesses a healthy climate, a fertile soil, and yields many useful productions; but to go further, and declare it to possess all these to the extraordinary degree which some persons do, would be more like the flashy praise of an auctioneer than the sober narrative of a respectable reporter.

Perhaps no country in the world is better adapted for purposes of husbandry. In fact, it is an agricultural country. There are many tracts of land, unpromising, and even sterile

in their aspect ; but yet there are also abundance of others, rich, luxuriant, and prolific. And even many of those which are condemned as utterly barren, could be reclaimed, under a proper system of tillage. Although the climate is extremely variable ; yet the crops are not less certain than in England, or Ireland. Droughts seldom occur : and the experienced agriculturist asserts, that the soil of Van Diemen's Land is much superior to that of England. Little, however, can be said as to the progress of cultivation in the island. Husbandmen seem to be pursuing a profession of which they have no knowledge ; to be guided by no maxims, and following no settled system, of agriculture ; to be ignorant of the nature of the soil, and the means of improving it ; and at the same time not less destitute of spirit than of capacity.

Few practical farmers have ever emigrated to the colony. The earlier settlers were chiefly artizans, of intemperate habits, unacquainted with husbandry, and disinclined to attain a knowledge of it. Still, they obtained and located themselves on grants of land ; turned up the soil, and threw grain into it ; and it being grateful, repaid their rude essays with bountiful harvests. This was sufficient. When one piece of land was exhausted, another was broken up ; and so on, in constant succession. Fresh settlers continued to arrive, and obtained land, too ; and as these were not agriculturists either, they had to copy their predecessors. Such was the progress of agriculture in Van Diemen's Land ; and such is its condition at the present period. The diversity of the climate in the different districts is still overlooked ; the seasons are scarcely ascertained ; and the proper times for sowing remain doubtful, and are adopted irregularly.

Oxen are employed in the plough almost upon every farm. The ox is said to be a safer beast than the horse, upon such ground as Van Diemen's Land, where the roots of the trees

descend so deep into the earth, and branch about so extensively. The ox, however, is more expensive than the horse; for the ploughman can manage the latter alone, but must have a driver with the former. The ox, too, is a tardy animal; and even on the score of the time which he loses, must be doubly expensive to his employer. The agriculturists of Van Diemen's Land are a needy, struggling, and, with respect to the other orders of the inhabitants, despised class of people. There are very few that are not involved in debt and difficulties; without any likelihood, under existing circumstances, of being released from their embarrassments. Such being the condition of agriculture, capitalists discard it, and employ their money, not in cultivating the soil, but in depasturing sheep upon it. These wander over wild estates, crop the spontaneous herbage of the earth, and yield a great income by their annual clip of wool. Hence, husbandry languishes, and grazing flourishes; the poor man can take only to the one, and the rich takes only to the other; and, therefore, in Van Diemen's Land, while poverty bows down the head of the farmer, wealth smiles in the face of the grazier.

Owing to a variety of causes, which perhaps I may have occasion to explain hereafter, most of the farms are mortgaged to usurers; to whom the needy borrower is, to all intents and purposes, the poor and oppressed tenant. Money cannot be borrowed in the colony at less than from twelve to twenty per cent.; and tillage, in no part of the world, will afford such an interest. Most of the small farms are naked and poverty stricken. A scanty stock of poor cattle straggle over fields that are cropped to their roots. No manure is provided, and cultivation wears the appearance of dearth and exhaustion.

The contrast, too, between a farm-house in England, and

one in Van Diemen's Land, is shocking. The dairy is neglected, and the cottage is cheerless. Neither butter nor milk is seen at many tables; and the principal food is hard, salted, Irish, marine beef or pork, with heavy, ill made, home-kneaded bread. Too poor to live upon his own cattle, the farmer adopts the bad economy of maintaining himself, his family, and his servants, upon salt provisions imported from Ireland.

The farmer's expenses, instead of being diminished, are increased, by having convicts on his farm; for the labour of one farm-servant in England is equal to that of two or three convict farm-servants in Van Diemen's Land; they saunter through their time, and work with reluctance. Most of the convicts have been bred in towns, and if a farmer get one good farm-servant out of six convict-servants, he conceives himself fortunate. To procure good servants from the Government, patronage is required; and a poor farmer, who has no interest at court, has often to content himself, and to be thankful for the gracious boon of a London pick-pocket for a shepherd, a pastry-cook for a ploughman, and a chimney-sweep for a bullock driver,—each of these he must lodge, feed, and clothe, and teach them their calling as he would apprentices. If he be fortunate and get a useful man, he prizes him beyond his value: insolence is forgiven, intemperance overlooked, distinction is shewn, presents made, and holidays granted,—and all to reconcile, frequently, a sullen and treacherous scoundrel to his daily, easy, overpaid duties.

Of all improvements to a country, the making of roads through all parts of it is the greatest. Without this, agriculture languishes, industry is suspended, capital withdrawn, enterprise decays, and the country finally falls to ruin. In such a settlement as Van Diemen's Land, where the force of available labour is immense, one would suppose, that for

good roads and cheap carriage, it would excel all parts of the world. But, startling as it may appear, the contrary is the fact. The roads are neglected, and therefore the cost of carriage is tremendous. You will pay no more for the transportation of goods from England to Van Diemen's Land, than for their conveyance from Hobart Town to thirty miles into the interior. Hence, the little profits on production are nearly exhausted in the expense of its carriage to market; and although many other things conspire to depress the farmer, this, above all, tends to ruin him the most.

Only one road has been made since the colony was established, and even this, which is the main road across the island, has been only partly made; for it reaches some miles out of Hobart Town and Launceston, but has not been so far extended as to join in the centre of the island. Cross-roads are unknown. And the difficulties and dangers of conveying produce from a farm to market, over a broken and rugged country, covered with fallen timber and other obstructions, no one can imagine but he who has witnessed them. The pageantry of a colonial court has been studied, and the suburbs of Hobart Town cleared and embellished. Fine avenues, open roads, and circuitous pathways towards the seats and country-houses of government officers, have been made; but the farm-house has been forgotten; roads to it have been unattended to; and the great, predominating, and important interests of the colony neglected and abused.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMMERCE AND INLAND TRADE OF THE ISLAND, &c.

THE commerce of Van Diemen's Land is insignificant; and its trade with the mother country narrow and trifling. It exports wool, oil, and whalebone; and sometimes a little bark; but nothing more. Wool is its primary production, the staple commodity of the colony. Its fishing is precarious, yet it is prosecuted with vigour and enterprise. Seals were numerous here some years ago, but they have now all disappeared. And the whale, too, that at one time was so attached to the coast, seems now to be deserting it; for, year after year, the whaler has to seek it at a greater distance. Few of the houses in England that have opened accounts with the colony, can, I imagine, have been gainers; their returns must have been slow, and their losses many. It imports from the mother country all articles of domestic furniture, clothing, and luxury, and, in fact, every kind of British manufacture.

Its trade with the sister colony of New South Wales is comparatively great. In seasons of drought, in this hotter region, Van Diemen's Land supplies it with grain and potatoes; and gets in return butter, cheese, and bacon, cattle, hides, and leather. Van Diemen's Land is much the poorer colony, and is always in arrears with New South Wales.

As the population of Van Diemen's Land is not large, its market must be small, and success in mercantile speculations is therefore uncertain. However, there are some few commercial gentlemen, who, from a small beginning in the colony, have realised independencies. They made their wealth when it was easy to make it—during the period of the

colony's infancy, when profits were exorbitant and competition inconsiderable. The times have now changed; the little transactions of the island are divided between a multitude of rivals, and an artful mind and experienced judgment are required in order to escape loss and calamity.

All markets fluctuate, but the small fluctuate more than the great; and especially when remote from a great mart or emporium. In this case, prices are never stationary, and profits must be always greatly above or below their natural rate;—and such is the condition of that of Van Diemen's Land. Consequently, the commercial interest is the monopolising interest; and to engross commodities, in order to sell them afterwards at advanced profits, is the only means to accumulate: every man here must become a speculator, if he desires to be a gainer by mercantile transactions.

House-rent averages the same as in London; and houses, with shop-fronts, are from a hundred to two hundred and fifty pounds per annum.

The retailer in Van Diemen's Land must possess a circle of knowledge beyond that which a retailer in London need possess; for in Van Diemen's Land he must not confine himself to one branch alone, but must spread his endeavours over many branches, and deal almost in every commodity. He is surrounded, too, by many disadvantages. His stock being miscellaneous, he must be for ever replenishing it; and as he is far away from the London markets, he must trust to the word of the merchant, and buy always upon hap-hazard. When the market falls he is generally the loser, for the merchant having had advices, takes care to dispose of the commodity, and throws the loss upon the shoulders of the shop-keeper. The manufactured goods are sold by invoice, which is said to state their genuine cost prices; and upon its gross amount is demanded a per centage, generally from

twenty to thirty per cent. If the purchaser be not well acquainted with the value of such goods, he is readily imposed upon, for most of these invoices are counterfeit, and by giving too great an advance upon them, he makes loss instead of profit.

The retailer has to contend, also, with the dangerous system of doing business wholly upon credit ; and also with a most provoking kind of competition. Cash payments are unknown ; and credit must be granted, or no business can be transacted. The facility of obtaining credit makes every one live beyond his income ; and bad debts are constantly being made. Hobart Town is replete with shopkeepers, and as its small population cannot afford a subsistence for all of these, each must resort to means for acquiring a larger share than his neighbour ; and hence the ordinary consequence occurs, of reducing profits, and underselling rivals. These, to preserve their connexions, must do likewise, and trade sinks into worthlessness. When it degenerates to this state of precariousness and insolvency, a long interval must elapse previous to its restoration and prosperity. Such, however, is its state in Van Diemen's Land ; and goods of all descriptions are in over-abundance, and selling at and under London prices.

As the shopkeepers cannot absorb the weekly importations of British merchandise, sent to the multitude of agents distributed over the colony, these agents have to become a kind of shopkeepers themselves ; and to break bulk, and sell by retail, stores are found in every corner, and what cannot be sold in the shop, is easily disposed of in the auction-room.

When trade falls into this state of depression, all kinds of industry fall with it. The capitalist can increase his capital, now in Van Diemen's Land, only in two ways : by grazing sheep, or lending at usury. And the man of little means is

better off at home, than he would be, were he in the colony. Situations are scarce, and salaries low; the wages of labour falls still lower in consequence of the free emigrant having to compete with the convict; so that no inducement remains for the labourer, the artisan, the farmer, the clerk, the shop-keeper, or the merchant, to quit his country for a colony thus situated.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAUSES OF THE DECLENSION OF THE COLONY, AND MEANS PROPOSED FOR ITS SPEEDY RECOVERY.

IN the foregoing pages I have described the physical capabilities and natural resources of the island, to be eminent. It has a safe, spacious, almost unrivalled harbour; a fertile and luxuriant soil; a healthy (and notwithstanding its inconstancy) a salubrious climate. What, therefore, restrains its prosperity, and renders it unsuitable for the residence of industrious emigrants? Why, instead of progressing, has it retrograded; and why, instead of being an honour, is it a dishonour to the mother country? The reasons for these seeming contradictions, I shall make the subjects of this chapter. I shall detail the cause of the declension of the colony; and then offer one or two simple suggestions as to how it may be recovered, and rendered ultimately prosperous and flourishing.

Abundance, and cheapness of good land, are the two causes which conduce to the quick prosperity of all new colonies. During the early periods of its settlement, the progress which Van Diemen's Land made towards opulence

was rapid and surprising. No colony advanced faster, and none ever developed so soon such superiority of advantages.

The causes which conduce to the quick prosperity of other colonies, were those which conduced to the quick prosperity of Van Diemen's Land. It abounded with good land, and this was granted away as a gift to those who had means to break it up and bring it under cultivation. Ask and have, was the rule between the government and the emigrant. Choose any portion of the soil, and then prove that you possess a sufficiency to entitle you to it, and your choice shall be yours. Such being the language of the government, capital and population flowed thither (if I may use the expression) from all parts of the united kingdom. The soil was cultivated, and industry put into motion; money was circulated; a trade with the mother country and other places opened; commerce improved, wealth accumulated; and energy, prosperity, and happiness, spread and flourished. Had this liberal governance of the colony been prolonged; had its affairs continued to be regulated by the same political wisdom; the same indifference to pecuniary profit, the same ingenuous conduct of administration, in spite of the abuses which were concealed, what a contrast would it have exhibited to its now depressed and pauperised condition!

The granting of land, therefore, to those who were able to cultivate it, was the cause of the quick prosperity of Van Diemen's Land. The departure from this system, and introduction of the regulations of selling land in the colony to the highest bidder, has been the cause of its quick decay. The soil came to be put up to auction at the minimum price of five shillings per acre; and to be knocked down, for prompt payment, to the out-bidders.*

* The minimum price has been now advanced to twelve shillings an acre, and it is in contemplation to raise it to twenty.

Before the enacting of this new regulation, the encouragement to emigrate to the colony was immense. On account of the land being granted to men of capital, every vessel brought numerous wealthy passengers, and according to his means, each obtained a proportionate grant or gift of land. Land being procured at so cheap a rate, every one was eager to obtain it; and the meanest individual, as soon as he could save a little money, became a landed proprietor.

These grants, however, were not allowed to lie dormant; for every grantee was bound, within a stipulated time, and to a certain extent, to break up and improve the grant that was given him; and unless such improvements were performed, he forfeited his title to the land, and was viewed no longer as its proprietor; it was resumed by the government, and regranted to a subsequent applicant.

Here was a stimulus to cultivate and improve the soil. Pride might prompt many a man to get the ownership of land; but to retain it, to preserve his right to it, he had to expend his capital. The colony was not suffered to lie under the supine authority of great indolent proprietors; but was allotted to those only, who would open its bosom, and reclaim its wildness. Under the auspices of such a protective and methodical adjustment, its woods soon came to be corn-fields, a wilderness was subdued by husbandry; farm-houses sprung up in numbers, and the true parent of prosperity, "productive labour," flung wide his blessing over the colony.

Such was the career of Van Diemen's Land until the year 1830, when the statesmen of the day turned their ingenious intellects to the realization of a scheme of theoretic calculation, propounded by a politico-economic projector. He ascribed the poverty of the mother country to its surplus population; and the slow progress of the colonies to a want

of hands. He therefore proposed, instead of granting the land, as heretofore in the new colonies, to sell it in portions to those who would give the most for it; and with the proceeds of these sales to assist this surplus population to transplant themselves from their native country to those new habitations. Charmed with the plausibility of this, the government listened to the sophist's arguments, and finally adopted them. The Governor of Van Diemen's Land was prohibited from granting any more land, and regulations concerted for the selling of it were transmitted to him. The terms of these are,—that the land be still chosen by the individual; that it then be advertised for sale by auction; that three months after this notice is given,—the government meanwhile having had the land surveyed,—it be put up to auction at 12s. per acre, and then knocked down to him who will bid the most for it. We shall now speak of the effects of this innovation, upon the welfare of the colony.

Its first effect was, to stop the flow of capital thither: as the channel was dammed up, the current drifted away. The man with money was no longer allured to Van Diemen's Land. Its lustre was dimmed, and its inducements rejected. The liberality of the crown in conferring upon the emigrant a free gift of land, struck every one with admiration. Fancy wandered amidst future probabilities; properties in England were disposed of, and their proprietors hastened to the shores of Van Diemen's Land. But the excitement is now over, and the public look with coolness on what might, perhaps, prove a foolish adventure. They calculate, and balance consequences; they perceive now the expense of removing a family to such a distance, without the certainty of bettering their condition. They see that land must be bought, and cannot be procured immediately. It must be first found, next advertised, and then, in three

months afterwards, put up to auction. The cost of maintaining a family during this interval, is thought on; and the likelihood, after all, of its not being knocked down to him by whom it was selected; numerous competitors are sure to surround him; and bribes are required to prevent opposition. But, supposing he becomes the purchaser, what then does he possess?—why, a wilderness; and this he has purchased for that for which he could have had a cultivated estate in his native country! The latter, too, he could have bought upon credit; while, for the former, he has had to pay down his ready money. The expense of his voyage, the maintaining of his family, the searching for the land, and the buying of it afterwards; the waste, the delay, the expenditure—all together have now exhausted his purse; and what has he remaining to begin the world upon?—what has he made by emigrating, but loss? and what awaits him but inevitable ruin?

It is true, a great capitalist can overcome these disadvantages, but where is the great capitalist that ever emigrated to Van Diemen's Land? Without a flow of capital, then, constantly issuing towards the colony, how is the colony to give employment to the multitude of hands which this emigration fund, arising from the sale of the soil, is constantly sending thither?

But this experimental mode of colonization has not only interrupted the flow of capital to the colony, but likewise closed up its resources, and paralyzed its energies.

No one can know the expense, the labour, the toil, and anxiety of clearing and breaking up new land, but the man who has experienced them.

Although the land were granted—although it were given to the settler, it would be always, if I may say so, a dear gift. Upon no land in the world grows such heavy, such

stubborn timber as upon Van Diemen's Land. The time spent in felling, in splitting, in burning, and in removing a single tree, is often equal to that of ploughing up and harrowing a corn-field; and even when this work has been achieved, years elapse before the roots are completely eradicated. It was not until after his third harvest that the settler had any produce to dispose of, and never, till five or seven years had expired, that he could stand erect, and say, he had surmounted his difficulties. All his capital was often expended before half of those were encountered, and his grant mortgaged, to enable him to contend with those that remained. Land, therefore, at the time of its being granted to settlers, although a gift, was seldom, after all, a precious gift. It is true, that many persons, with extraordinary perseverance, made properties of such for their posterity, but many more, notwithstanding their perseverance, ruined themselves, and have portioned out poverty to their families.

With all these facts before him, it is not likely that he who purchased land would ever cultivate it. The colonists themselves have bought at the public sales great tracts of land, but not one of these allotments has been broken up and appropriated to husbandry.

At the period when the prohibition of granting land was instituted, an advance in the price of wool took place in the home markets, and this advance has remained comparatively firm ever since. Land therefore has been purchased with avidity, not for agricultural, but for grazing purposes; and the depasturing of sheep over the country has been the common result of selling the soil for prompt payment to the public. Van Diemen's Land, from being the rich, the bountiful, the promising mistress of tillage, has changed at once into the passive, spiritless, sauntress of pasturage. A

few haughty capitalists have usurped its districts ; and convict shepherds walk therein over alluvial soil, tending their masters' flocks. Districts which, if thrown open to the hand of husbandry, would afford maintenance to the multitude of pauper emigrants who are straying about the island unemployed, and to multitudes of others in the mother country who are prepared to labour, if labour could be procured.

While land was granted to those who could cultivate it ; butcher's meat was always at a low price. The struggling emigrant could follow his calling in town prosperously ; he could live within his income, and save a little to establish himself afterwards in the world. Land was suffered to be every man's property until it was granted to a single one. The settler's cattle were allowed to wander unrestricted over all unlocated land, and to crop the wild spontaneous herbage of nature. Herds therefore multiplied, and food was good, cheap, and plentiful.

When, however, the new regulation of selling the ground came into operation, this license had to be restrained, for if such liberty continued to be extended, where would be found purchasers for the land ? Hence an act was passed by the Legislature, forbidding the public any longer to make use of land not their own ; and their cattle were accordingly impounded, if found trespassing upon such as belonged to the crown. To avoid the consequences of this act, those who could not buy land, sold their cattle ; and this diminution in the profits of their establishments, constrained many to relinquish agriculture altogether. Herds of cattle were in a manner sacrificed ; and meat has long been bad, and scarce, and dear. New South Wales, where the common liberty of grazing over Government land continues, has long been the provision house for Van Diemen's Land ; and salted beef,

and pork, are imported from the mother country in great quantities.

But the abolition of the granting of land, and the substitution of the selling of it to the highest bidder, have been mischievous to the colony in two other respects. They brought with them an ardour for the wildest speculations, and a spirit for prodigality and profusion, which have caused loss of capital, and, in conjunction with the other consequences that I have been relating, ultimate ruin to the settlement.

Tillage being no longer a profitable undertaking, and husbandry of every kind therefore abandoned, it remained for the capitalist to become either a flockmaster or a tradesman; and as the choice was simple, each was readily espoused. As soon as land came to be sold, it became very valuable; and every man sought to be a purchaser. At every sale competitors arose; and as these fancied that the price of land would advance in the same ratio, none restrained their bidding; and the value of land rose in consequence to a rate, unprecedented in the annals of new colonies. The purchasing of land, in order to sell it afterwards at a profit, was viewed at last, as the chief means speedily to attain colonial opulence; even old estates were mortgaged, so as to raise money to buy up new ones; and the most complex and intricate contrivances were resorted to, for the acquisition of means to effect this purpose. Previous to the day for the public sales of crown land, the people were in the midst of bustle, business, and confusion; jealousy burned in the bosoms of rivals; competition was keen; and land brought often one hundred per cent. more than its intrinsic value: within five years from the date of the introduction of those sales, all the land in the colony had advanced, at least, two hundred per cent. over its former rate. The British Government, eager to have the land sold, and to promote the emigration of the lower orders

to the colony, published extravagant accounts of its capacities and prosperity; and these were ardently responded to all over the kingdom, by the numerous interested ship-agents, and emigration missionaries, that were nominated by the crown. Wealthy men held back; but cargo after cargo, of poor entrapped paupers, were thrown, unprovided, upon the shores of Van Diemen's Land.

In England, the eye of commerce is never closed. Seeing such multitudes of poor people crowding to the colony; and hearing so much of its extraordinary prosperity, merchants turned their attention thither; and forthwith opened accounts with it: branch houses were sent out; and warehouse after warehouse was erected there. As shipments soon accumulated on the hands of the consignees, encouragement had to be extended, so as to get rid of their surplus merchandise; and a hateful system of credit was therefore put into operation. Those who had had to abandon tillage, now took to shopkeeping as their next calling; and the buying in bulk, and selling by retail, became the business of every small capitalist. Goods still poured into the market; and as no one, as yet, foresaw loss in the importing of them; but, apparently, immense gain, rivalry diffused itself, and all were anxious to become importers of merchandise from England: he that could raise fifty pounds, sent it to London, and received, in exchange, its value in commodities. As importations thus multiplied and competition increased, customers were received with open arms, and liberal accommodations.

The system of granting unlimited credit, descended from the merchant to the shopkeeper; for as the latter purchased upon easy terms, he sold upon terms as easy: and an unguarded habit of expense, thus became a characteristic of most of the colonists: even the boy in office, with a salary

perhaps not exceeding seventy pounds per annum, lived at the rate of two hundred.

As every man got a great profit on what he sold (for prices were seldom higgled over), these, as great profits always do, produced a love for pomp and magnificence. Houses came to be decorated; street equipage displayed; and affluence seemed staring every man in the face. Trade appearing so prosperous, those who came to better their condition, and who had not done so, now thought that they had mistaken the means; deserted their callings; and became dabbling traffickers. All spurned their former judicious avocations; and they who could not open shops, took packs under their arms, and travelled as pedlars through the country.

Hobart Town was shortly over-populated; and as house-rent rose considerably, a new channel opened for speculation: and capital was divided between the depasturing of sheep, the importing of goods and the building of houses in town. Allotments for building upon were therefore bought up with avidity; and ground, in a short time, sold, in Hobart Town, for as much the foot, as it could have brought had it been in the heart of London. Spurious capitals were now put into circulation; and every one, as he thought, saw wealth within his reach: houses were erected upon paper currency; and accommodation bills flew abroad incautiously and unlimitedly. Fresh banks of issue arose; and any bill of exchange, with two names upon it, was discounted with promptitude and alacrity. Business could not be transacted fast enough; usurers sprang up in great abundance: speculations were flaring in all corners, and every wild and foolish adventure was commended and admired.

Gold and silver alone were taken in payment for crown land; and the local government,* anxious to make known to

* Under Colonel Arthur's administration.

its masters the prosperity of the settlement, locked its coffers upon all money that it received ; and thereby made the show of a great balance in favor of the colony. Large importations of cattle, and other produce, being constantly made from the sister colony, drew immense sums away from Van Diemen's Land ; and these, together with the above policy, caused a great diminution in the circulating medium. The bankers, at last, became alarmed, and stopped their discounts ; the contagion spread ; and consternation, and dismay were seen in every man's countenance. The times have grown worse ; and the crisis has arrived ! The endeavour is no more to make money, but only to save that which has been made. Every man that can is quitting the colony ; and the fine little island of Van Diemen's Land, seems doomed to neglect, to poverty, and to desolation ! The fanciful expedient, therefore, to relieve the mother country and assist her colonies, by altering the old system of colonization, has been greatly mischievous to that colony, of which we have been speaking : and not to it only, but likewise to the mother country.

The selling of the soil of Van Diemen's Land to the highest bidder, in place of the old regulation, of granting it to any one who had the means to cultivate it, has been greatly mischievous to the colony,—

First, Because it has interrupted a kind of emigration which was beneficial and productive ; by repelling capitalists and introducing paupers in their stead.

Secondly, Because it has been the destruction of husbandry, and has sent capital from a productive into unproductive channels.

Thirdly, Because it occasioned the passing of an impounding act, which stopped the increase of cattle ; impoverished the carcase of the sheep, by causing too many to be

kept together upon bare tracts of land ; disabled the colony for maintaining its own inhabitants with butchers' meat ; and rendered them dependent for supplies upon other places.

Fourthly, Because it brought with it a spirit of over-speculation, of vanity, and of prodigality, which has made bankrupts of the inhabitants, and spread distress, horror, and desolation over the colony.

It has been greatly mischievous to the mother country :—

First, Because it has injured her commerce, by bringing heavy losses upon her merchants at home.

Secondly, Because it has banished into exile and poverty numerous people, who, if they had remained at home, could have improved their condition, and thereby benefited their native soil.

And thirdly, Because it has been the means of diffusing false ideas on the subject of our colonies, rendering people unsettled, and discontented with their situations at home ; because it has incited emigration agents, for the sake of a profit per head on each deluded emigrant, to imitate, as it were, the system of slave-catching ; and thus filled the colonies with disappointments, pauperism, despondency, crime, and suicide.

Three things seem to me to be required, to revivify the drooping spirit of Van Diemen's Land, and endue it with ability, both to maintain itself, and to subserve all the objects, which the home Legislature have been vainly endeavouring to attain, during so long a period.

First, To rescind the abominable existent land regulations ; to throw open the unlocated territory to the hand of husbandry ; to explode all narrow-minded restrictions ; and to make the soil available to any one, how limited soever his capital, that may have the courage and industry to break up and improve it.

Secondly, To continue the transporting of convicts to the colony, but to discontinue the assigning of them to private service; to abolish this branch of prison discipline, in Van Diemen's Land, altogether.

And thirdly, To extend to the colony free institutions; by granting it liberty to manage its own finances; and liberty to regulate its own local affairs according to its own wisdom.

While I recommend the abolition of the public sale of the land to the highest bidder, I am far from being desirous to see the old system of the granting of it away by governors, resumed. For although I have attempted to prove some of the good effects of this system, I forbore to notice the overbalancing influence which its evils and corruptions had upon the colony. Governors were invested with supreme authority over the soil. Their prerogatives entitled them to make a grant to whom they pleased; and accordingly, their will was the measure of every emigrant's fortune. Notwithstanding that by right of property, a man could demand the possession of a certain quantity of land, yet, he could neither demand the spot which he had chosen, or (if the Governor thought proper) any other spot, without much trouble, expense, and delay. Good land was seldom granted but to favourites; and colonial patronage sunk the colonists into sycophancy, and thralldom. The Governor's notice and esteem were sought for by all the inhabitants, and his domination was greater, than that of a Turkish Sultan, or any other Eastern potentate. The deceptive means, too, which were frequently resorted to with success, to get a grant of land from the Governor, in order to sell it to a friend afterwards; the corrupt practices, the dishonesty, the trickery, the hoodwinking, and the multifarious arts that were in constant action, all prove, that the old system of conferring upon a Governor, the extraordinary privilege of granting land to whom he pleased, ought never, on any account, to be resumed.

The sale of the land, therefore, may be persevered in with much benefit to the colony ; but, at the same time, these sales ought to be established upon a safer, and more liberal foundation.

First, The odiousness of selling it by public auction to the highest bidder must be apparent, and its abrogation cannot well be opposed. The impolicy, too, of requiring prompt payment, must be obvious ; and the necessity for its repeal must also be granted. These are the two monstrous regulations which have crippled the inhabitants, and laid the colony prostrate ; these are the causes which have brought about its declension ; that have driven away its capitalists ; stopped its cultivation ; broken its independency ; and left the island in bankruptcy and ruin.

Let one common, uniform price, therefore, be fixed indiscriminately upon all the land that can be sold in the colony ; and let it be open for purchase, in any quantity, and in any situation, to any persons, how small soever their capital, that apply for it ; let a liberal time for its payment be extended, and this payment, be either secured upon the land itself, or guaranteed by proper and sufficient bondsmen ; let no delay take place after such purchase, in having the land surveyed and transferred ; but let all be expedition, ease, and accommodation.

Van Diemen's Land is truly an agricultural ; New South Wales, a grazing country. The former possesses all the advantages for husbandry ; the latter, all the requisites for pasturage. Tillage can be prosecuted vigorously in the one, but very precariously in the other. While New South Wales possesses an immense territory, Van Diemen's Land is only a small island. Grain alone can, with any degree of profit, be the production of this ; but wool will ever be the golden pro-

duct of that. New South Wales has a climate peculiarly suited for the growth of this commodity, unsurpassed perhaps by any in the world ; but not so for grain. A lofty range of mountains, called the Blue Mountains, lie across the country, forty to fifty miles from the coast, and intercept the progress of husbandry any farther ; for its productions would never pay the toil and expense of transport, over these mountains. The soil is dry and sandy, and except near the coast, not worth cultivation. The country is liable to floods, from the torrents which sometimes pour down from the above-named mountains ; often washing the crops away. Droughts frequently occur, and, in consequence, Van Diemen's Land has been always looked upon, as a granary for New Holland.

On the other hand, although Van Diemen's Land is adapted for the prosperous growth of wool ; yet it is far better suited to the culture of grain. Its wool is inferior to that of the sister colony, but its grain, always superior : this too it can house, and preserve uninjured from the ravages of insects, which New South Wales cannot do. Here the weevil exists, and quickly destroys the grain that is kept for any time. Hence Van Diemen's Land, if left to the free industry of its population, would, as formerly, become an agricultural country. By being able to produce more, it would soon come to consume more ; when it had found an outlet for its surplus produce (which it readily could in New Holland and other adjacent places), it would soon open a door for importations, and be a large market for British manufactures. New South Wales being no longer obliged to attend to the production of grain, would turn all her attention to that of wool ; and as her riches extended, her market for home consumption would extend too ; the interests of both colonies would be interwoven ; the mother country

benefited ; each would reciprocate with the other ; and all share together in advantage and improvement.

Much has been said, and a great deal more written, by official persons, in praise of the system of prison discipline in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. As respects its worth in Van Diemen's Land (which, by-the-bye, is the same with that of the sister colony), the reader, I dare say, has by this time, formed a pretty accurate judgment. But as these pages may, peradventure, fall into the hands of those who possess the wish, and have the power, to reform the system, I shall here give my reasons for recommending the abolition of that branch of it, which I call, "the assigning of convicts to private service : " more particularly as this branch has been panegyrised, as the grand desideratum, for bringing into practical operation, the essential objects of transportation.*

These objects are three-fold. First, as a punishment ; secondly, as an example ; and thirdly, as a means of moral regeneration.

First then, as a punishment, the assigning of convicts to private service, is unequal, and uncertain. It is unequal, because the assassin, often meets with less severity, than the mere pick-pocket ; and uncertain, because whether either meets with any punishment at all, depends wholly upon the temper of the master.

Secondly, as an object of example, even from these two circumstances, its absurdity is obvious.

When sentence of transportation is passed, the criminal's

* It appears that an order has very recently gone out to reform the system of prison discipline, but as the governor possesses a discretionary power and may reject this order if he thinks proper, and as I am convinced that, in consequence of the clamour which will be raised by interested persons, he will reject it, my remarks may perhaps induce the Secretary for the Colonies to insist upon a reformation.

fears are attempted to be aroused, by the recital of a catalogue of terrors; but after his removal to Van Diemen's Land, and when he begins to correspond with his veteran companions, how quickly must the recital of this catalogue lose its force upon his mind! Perhaps he is a good farm-servant, and here he has to relate all his master's kindness and liberalities to him; he describes (of course with some exaggeration) the plenty and variety of wholesome food, which he has at command; the two or three suits of good clothing, which he gets in the year; the many presents which are made to him; his great services to his master, and his master's consciousness of them; and finally finishes by advising all his friends, to close their career at home, and partake with him of convict prosperity.

Again, perhaps he is assigned to a master in Hobart Town, and here, he all at once is metamorphosed into a liveried servant, or is engaged in some simple, and easy servitude; if an artificer, he is assigned to a master, who gives him every encouragement, and puts him on a footing with the free emigrant. Again, perhaps he is a man of education; and then he is instantly put into an office, as a clerk; his hours of duty are few; he is suffered to be attired as he thinks proper; and passes in public, not only as a free man, but as a gentleman.

But again, should he be a very clever scoundrel, he is then instantly made a constable of, and invested with authority, not only over his fellow-convicts, but over the free inhabitants. Now, should his condition not be equal to any of these, let him be assigned to a merciless tyrant, who loves dominion, and takes pleasure in having, when he can, the backs of his servants lashed and lacerated, and what influence has this man's sufferings with his companion at home? Why, none; for in this case his correspondence with them

ceases, and they therefore still only hear of the (probable) good fortunes of his companions.

If there be any proof wanted, to show that transportation in its existent shape, fails in producing any terror in the mother country, what stronger can be adduced, than that so many prisoners of late, have confessed their offences, declaring that the commission of them was prompted by the wish to be transported ?

Thirdly, as a means of moral regeneration, its failure is proved simply, by the variety of temptations which encircle it. After all its vaunted virtues in this respect ; after all that has been said of it, written on it, and attributed to it, its discipline towards the reclaiming of the vicious is replete with error and nonsense. I grant that in many convicts, both male and female, reformation has been produced ; but I deny that such was in consequence of any efficacy in their assignment to private service. Masters have been always inefficient monitors ; and the reformation took place not from the effect of their authority, but in spite of it. I have never seen the morals of the convict so closely watched by a master, as it is supposed they are : for masters and mistresses employ convicts, not in order to make them better members of society, but alone for the sake of their services ; if these be of common worth, private conduct will occasion but small solicitude with the employer. As long as his or her tranquillity is not disturbed, the secret behaviour of the servant is little revolved in the mind of either. Moreover, by excessive leniency in assigned service, some degenerate into worse habits than before ; and by excessive rigor, others at length spurn subjection altogether, and go with impetuosity into wildness and desperation.

We have attempted to prove, that the placing of the convict under the authority of a private person, or that

branch of prison discipline, denominated the assignment system, fails in the three-fold object of transportation ; that it neither acts as a punishment, an example, nor a means of amendment. We shall now endeavour to find what influence the system has in retarding the advancement of the colony itself.

By distributing convicts over the colony, and bringing into play their labour and skill in every mechanical operation, and every species of servitude, the prospects of free emigrants are destroyed, and their means of subsistence curtailed, and in some instances altogether taken away :—

First, by the local Government employing convicts in all its public works, as masons, carpenters, smiths, boat-builders, and in various other occupations, free persons of these particular callings are supplanted. The master, too, is sometimes as much injured as the journeyman. A notable example of this political economy was exhibited during the administration of a late governor.* The labour of a number of convicts was turned towards the making and burning of bricks ; these, as soon as they were manufactured, were instantly sold by public auction for as much as they would bring. In a few weeks the commodity fell so low in value, that all the free people who were engaged as master brick-makers, were constrained to abandon the business ; hands were discharged, many masters failed, and many persons suffered in consequence.

Secondly,—while masters are granted the loan of convict mechanics, how is the free emigrant to find employment ? He must sit down in poverty and idleness, because his place is occupied by the more fortunate transport.

But with respect to its injuries individually—Thirdly, what mischief proceeds from the patronage which it puts

* Sir George Arthur.

within the power of the Governor? The right is transmuted to a compliment, and the favourite gets the hands that another applicant is refused.

But above all, what are its effects upon the moral virtues of the free inhabitants? It debases their character, and disseminates among them the seeds of depravity.

It seldom happens that the male or female convict is suffering for his or her first, second, or even third offence; for it is not until the offenders have become obnoxious by repetitions of crime, that they are ever transported. When they are looked upon as incorrigible, recognized as dangerous people, perverted in mind, depraved in disposition, grown implacably callous to chastisement, it is then, only, that the punishment of transportation is awarded. May we then ask, do these degraded and lost creatures lose at once all their hateful propensities when removed to another country? and do they become immediately fit to mingle and associate with a free and virtuous people? Coercion may repress the appearance of vice, but it cannot eradicate it; contagion must spread if malignity exist; and the society must grow depraved, where depravity circulates.

Are these creatures, then, the proper persons to send as servants into private families? Can a master or mistress be constantly watching over the actions and conversations of his or her servants, in order to save the infant mind from contamination? Will a child shut its eyes to the exhibition of infamy, or turn away from the wretch who has been polluting its morals, and poisoning its future happiness? With thieves and outcasts under every roof, what commonwealth but must at last become abandoned? This branch of convict discipline, therefore, is impolitic, mischievous, and condemnable. It answers not as a punishment, nor as an example, nor as a means of amendment. It is hurtful to the

free inhabitants, it is destructive to their interests, degrading to their honour, and injurious to their morality.

The pilfering of assigned servants is equal upon the employer, to what his taxes would be in England. He is always apprehending theft, and for this reason is in constant disquietude. He is for ever in communication with constables and magistrates—appearing against one servant, and supplicating for another. His liberty, and that of the society is abridged, because these servants are scattered about in it. He submits to the rule of convict constables, because such constables alone are suited for such a society; and he stands in the midst of perplexities, annoyances, and humiliations.

Let male convicts then, no longer waste their labour over a daily routine of petty duties, which tend so greatly in every respect to the injury of the colony; but let them be brought together in a body, and their labour consolidated into one great union of strength and efficacy: in clearing the ground, laying open the country; in making roads, and in erecting bridges. By this means, a foundation would be laid for every sort of improvement; the colony would be assisted, and the mother country benefited; transportation would then become a punishment; and not only a punishment, but a great punishment, equal in its application, and certain in its effect. Good conduct could still be rewarded, and being doubly precious, the reward would then be sought for with more assiduity. An example would be made; terror inspired; and crime checked. From such an amount of labour employed only in public operations, prosperity would soon spring up in the colony, and diffuse its blessings, even on the mother country; free labour would come into demand; and emigration into activity; wealth would produce wealth; the poor would be employed, and the rich profited.

How to employ the female convict, so as to make her employment a punishment,—a means towards her own reformation, and towards making her an example to her own sex, I must really implore some of the wiser of themselves to discover!

But one observation still remains to be made. The constitution of the civil authority, both in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales, has a defect, which demands to be meliorated. The offices of governor and convict disciplinarian are clearly distinct; and by confounding the two together, and placing the functions and administration of each in the hands of one man, both come to be exercised carelessly, illiberally, and unwisely. Their qualifications are repugnant, and therefore their duties ought to be separated. The habits which are adapted to regulate the affairs of a free people, have no connexion with those necessary to the dispensing of the rigorous discipline of a jail; and he who can manage refractory convicts with dexterity, has seldom the ability to manage free people with temper and consistency.

All the imperfections which we have been showing in the system of assigning the convict to private service, have ever been aggravated by the abusive administrations of governors; for it devolves on each of these, at last, to make transportation either a punishment or the contrary. All its elements are centered in his disposition. If he be austere, it shall be dreaded; but if philanthropic, despised. What the one has built up, the other throws down; and the regulations of the former are superseded by the innovations of the latter.

Perhaps it may now be said, "if all the male convicts be brought together, and their labour applied to the objects which you have in view, this labour would soon become

superabundant, and the expense upon the mother country be augmented.”

Many years, however, would elapse before the colonists would have to complain of such superabundance; and when that period should arrive there are few colonies that would not be glad to give convict labour the same employment. The expense, too, upon the mother country, instead of being augmented, might, I think, be easily diminished.

To have good roads, and to keep them in repair, are peculiar public objects with every society; and no member ever murmurs while contributing his share towards their proper maintenance. Why, therefore, should colonies be exempted from both bearing and sharing such blessings? *They* wish not for any such exemption! Prison discipline, then, instead of being a burden upon the mother country, might, under judicious regulations, be made a simple, beneficial branch of its affairs; and instead of being, as at present, an unjust impediment to, might be made the happy means of greatly accelerating colonial advancement.

All revolutions, however, ought to be tempered by time and opportunity; and to withdraw the assigned convict, suddenly, from the service of his master, would be the act rather of giddy innovation, than of prudence. To leave the settler without a man to till his ground, while you made roads to his farmstead, would be like throwing open the gates of the prison to a captive, and binding him to the earth to prevent his escape. Let ample notice then be given, before the intention be put into operation.

But says the statesman, “if prompt payments for the sales of land be abandoned, and therefore the means taken from us of aiding the stream of emigration to the colony, how is the place of the convicts to be supplied?”

I humbly reply—pray, save yourself all this anxiety; for

your solicitude is unnecessary, and your interference mischievous. You can be generous without being officious. Hitherto your efforts to be useful to the colony have been idle: yea more, while you have endeavoured to succour the colonists and befriend the emigrant, you have hurt the interests of both. The settler knows the kind of hands he wants better than you can know them. He wants not the idlers, the drunkards, or the unskilful, whom you have been pleased to send him. Nor his wife, either the vocalists, the dancing mistresses, the drawing mistresses, and the variety of other kinds of mistresses, whom you have been pleased to send her. Nor does either desire, that delusion be practised in order to obtain the services of any one, or to see any person wheedled into sorrow, destitution, and banishment.

There would still be a land revenue; a fund which would be constantly increasing; and this might be applied as an emigration-fund by the colonists themselves. They who wanted assistants from the mother country would soon find a means to obtain them, without your interposition. A remission of his debt to the Government might be granted to the purchaser of land equal to the expense he could prove he had been at for their passage; and if not a debtor to the Government, he might claim its aid out of this fund upon the arrival of the emigrant.

As the free inhabitants of the colony are the subjects of the Queen of England, they ought to possess the birth-rights of her subjects. They acknowledge to her their allegiance, and she ought to extend to them their civil privileges. Is it because the little land which they inhabit happens to be separated from that where she personally administers her authority, that they are to be viewed as aliens? If they return to the British Isles, they then again are incorporated with the Constitution; but while away from them, although

standing upon British soil, their rights are broken, and their liberty abridged. Is it not preposterous to say, that we may be ruled as loyal subjects in one part of her dominions, but only as a conquered and degraded people in another ! That here we may glory in the lustre which the name of our country sheds around us ; but that there we must stoop our heads to oppressions, and be wretched sharers of despotism and reproach !

What are the free inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land, but the petty slaves of a petty despotism ! They have no voice in the disposal of their public affairs, neither trial by jury, representative election, nor any command over the revenue of the settlement.

The inhabitants of no British colony possess liberty on the clear ground of unlimited equality with those of the mother country ; but none have their rights wholly denied to them, save the colonists of New South Wales, and Van Diemen's Land.

Here it is said to be dangerous to extend those rights, because of their being convict settlements ; and therefore we part with our liberty, when we emigrate to their shores. But were legislation by free representation granted to those colonies, the cry of danger would cease. Presumption would prompt no emancipist to be a candidate for suffrage, nor would his voice be heard in the legislature of the province. Still, for the sake of argument, see him, through wealth, false ambition, or good fortune, raised to a seat in the councils of the Assembly, and where is the danger to follow his elevation ? Would he desire to pervert the interest of the country in which his property was at stake ? or would he be less suited to fill such a station in this colony, than he would in another, to which he could easily remove himself ? Are all men that are transported, villains, incapable, ever afterwards,

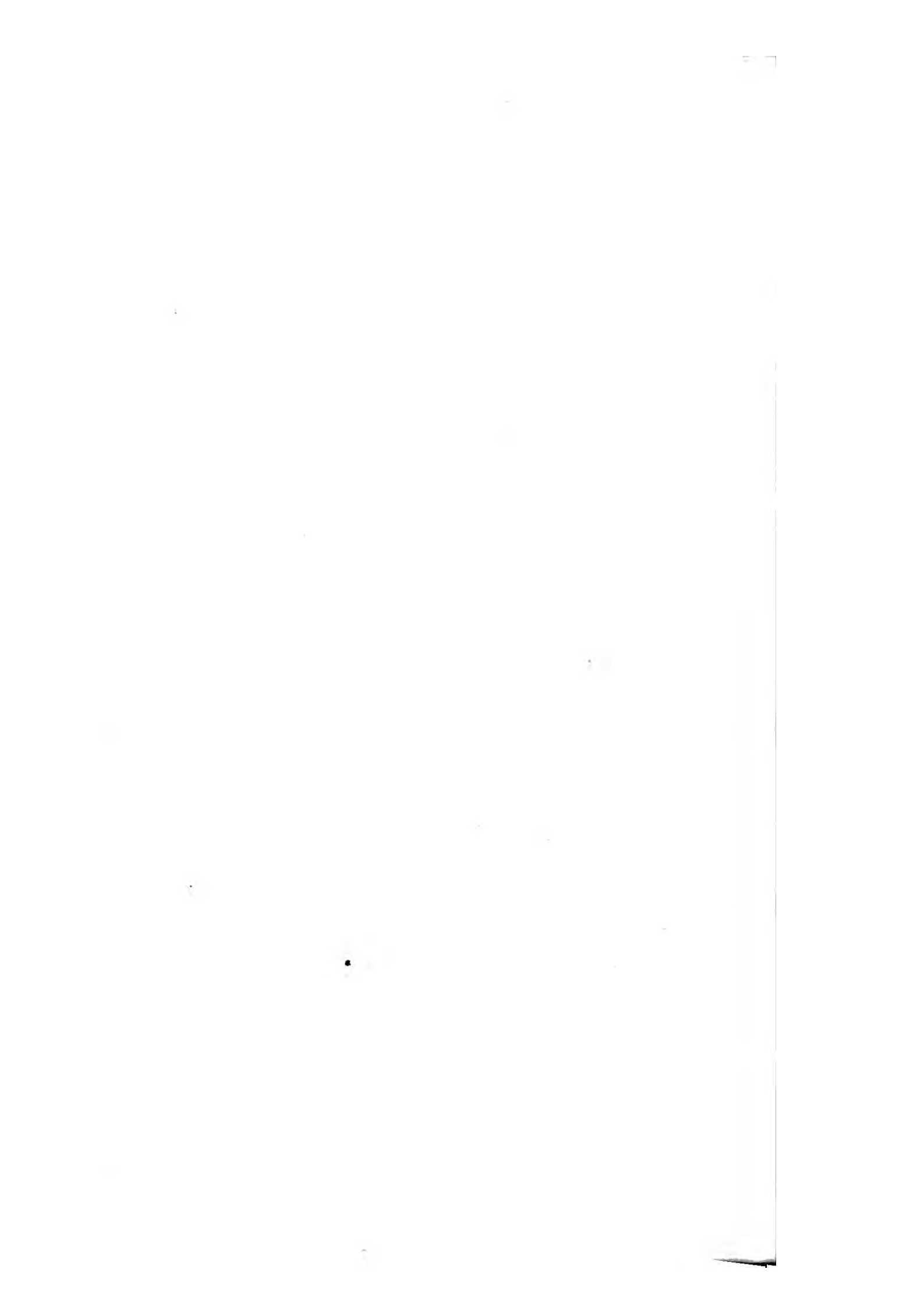
of any virtue? And is it because a man has been *convicted* of an offence, that he must be inferior in heart, and mind, to his neighbour, who *escaped* conviction?

Hence, all that we have said, resolves itself into this :

That Van Diemen's Land possesses, naturally, a great variety of advantages, sufficiently important if properly developed, to make it commensurate with the expectations of sober enterprise; to make it absorb a large portion of unemployed English labor, and render it an extensive market for the produce of British industry :

That the course of its prosperity was stopped by the misguided policy of the mother country; and that by her injudicious perseverance therein, it has finally sunk into feebleness and poverty :

That, in order to revive its energies, and meliorate its condition, it seems necessary, First; to abolish or reform the existent land regulations. Secondly; no longer to put able-bodied convicts to a listless species of servitude; but to employ the labor of all, in clearing the forests, and cutting roads through the country : to withdraw the duties of convict superintendence from the Governor, who to-day may make transportation a punishment, while his successor to-morrow makes it a bounty; and fix it invariably under the direction of a permanent strict disciplinarian. And thirdly; to grant the colonists the command over their own revenue; and allow them to regulate their local affairs in the way they may deem best suited to promote their own interests, and the prosperity of their adopted country.



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