

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

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The Condition and Capabilities of Van Diemen's Land as a Place of Emigration by John Dixon

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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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1839.

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## P R E F A C E.

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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.

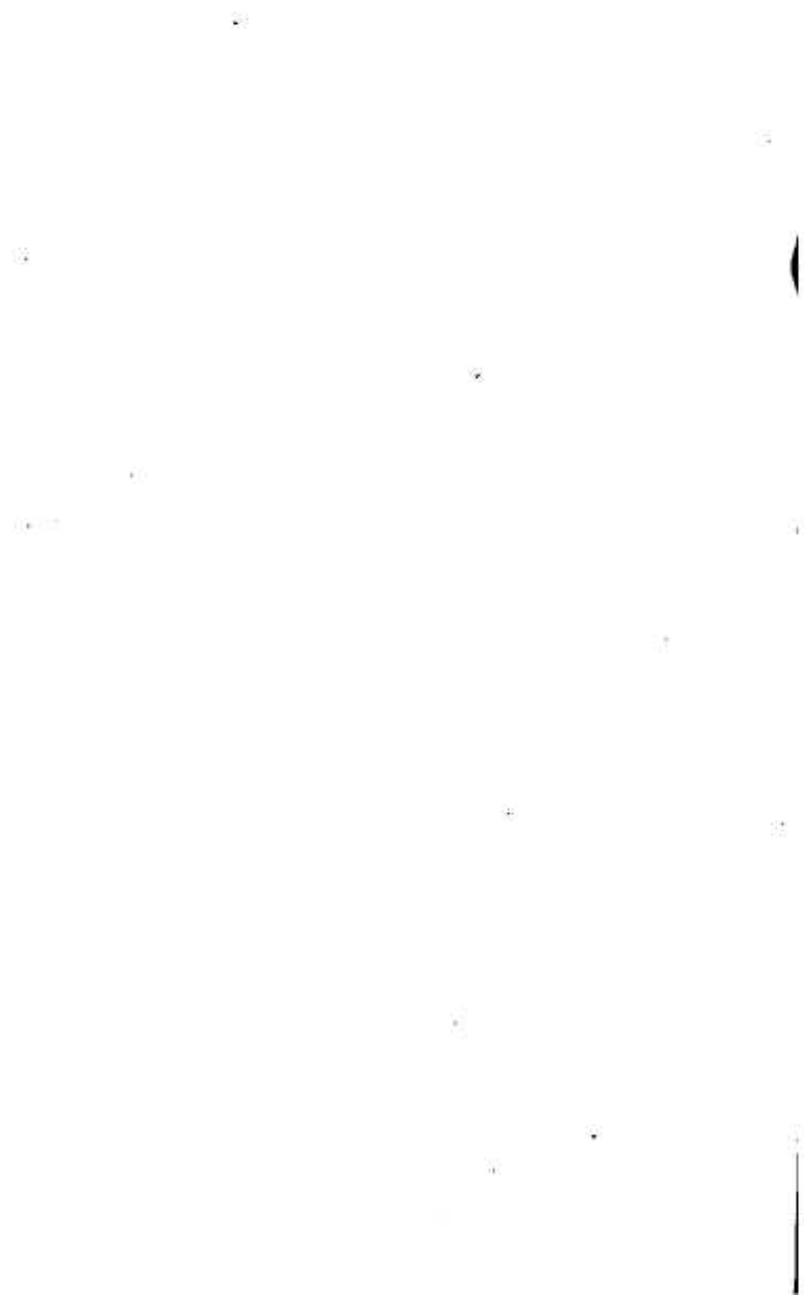
Finding, upon my arrival, that misconception and false knowledge concerning it, still maintain the ascendant, and that, although many works have been published lately upon adjacent colonies, not one has appeared upon Van Diemen's Land alone, I have viewed it almost as a duty, due to myself and to the 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.





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