

Leaves from the diary of a Van Diemen's Land official

By

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INTRODUCTION

Before I ring up the curtain, and bring before the footlights the characters who played their parts upon the little Stage of Van Diemen's Land Society of the first half of last century, described for us with such fidelity in the pages of the *Diarist* about whom I propose to talk to-night, I ought, perhaps, to remind you that the circumstances in which they lived, and the various offices they filled, were vastly different from those of the present day. During those years Tasmania was a Crown Colony, governed from Downing Street. The Governor, the chief civil officials, the officers of the Army and Navy, and the Clergy, were all appointed and paid by the Imperial Government. They regarded themselves as a more or less privileged class, apart from and superior to the rest of the community, and were thus rather disposed to magnify their office, and to treat the ordinary residents as 'lesser breeds without the Law'. In return, they were often subjected to a deluge of criticism from Press and Public, which to-day would be considered as exceeding the bounds of good taste, and would probably involve the author in a claim for heavy damages for libel in a Court of Law.

The author of the *Diary*, GEORGE THOMAS WILLIAM BLAMEY BOYES, better known by his contemporaries as 'Alphabetical Boyes', was born at Stubbington in England in 1787. After leaving school he entered the Army in the Commissariat Department, and at the age of 24 years was sent to Lisbon, and served under Wellington during the Peninsular War. At the conclusion of hostilities he returned to England and married.

In 1823 he received orders from the Treasury to proceed to New South Wales, to join the Commissariat Department there under General Darling, as Deputy Assistant Commissary General, and when, in 1826, the Commissariat Department of Van Diemen's Land was separated from that of New South Wales, he was transferred to Hobart Town, to take up the office of Auditor of Civil Accounts, and remained in the Public Service of this Colony until his death, in 1853.

He might well be called 'The Samuel Pepys of Van Diemen's Land', for during the whole of his official life he kept a *Diary*, in which, like his famous prototype, he records almost every detail of his daily life. Its thirteen closely-written volumes, which are now in the possession of the Royal Society, contain, in addition to domestic and personal items, a mass of social gossip and scandal, obviously not intended for publication, as well as information of official and historical interest, and provide us with an extraordinarily vivid picture of contemporary life in this community.

With the possible exception of the *Knopwood Diaries*, they constitute, perhaps, the most complete personal record of current events yet discovered.

His official duties were competently performed, and he enjoyed the confidence of all the Governors under whom he served, and, what is more remarkable, he managed to steer clear of conflict with those among whom he moved and worked. Arthur speaks of his 'zeal, ability, and urbanity, gratifying to the Government and residents of the Colony', and even the V.D.L. Chronicle, in commenting on his appointment as Colonial Secretary, expresses satisfaction that the post had gone to a man 'of known amenity of manner and amiable disposition'. This was high praise, indeed, from a paper noted for its hostility to the Franklin régime.

Mr. Boyes' official position as Colonial Auditor, Colonial Secretary, Caveat Commissioner, Member of the Executive and Legislative Councils, and Member of the Committee of the Queen's Orphanage, brought him into contact with all grades of Society, and his pen portraits of contemporary notabilities are among the most interesting items in the Diary. From these, and from his descriptions of current events, I have selected such passages as may, I hope, afford both historical interest and entertainment. I take no responsibility for the opinions and criticisms expressed, which are solely those of the writer, and are reproduced for the benefit of students of Tasmanian history ⁽¹⁾.

Let us take first his sketches of the four Governors under whom he served:

COL. GEORGE ARTHUR

Of Lt. Governor George Arthur he says this: 'B— in the course of conversation said there was a chilling formality about Government House that he could never bring himself to feel easy under. He believed there was no want of intention to do what was civil and agreeable and to make themselves popular, but the fact was, and it was useless to attempt to conceal it, they had not the tact and did not understand it. He said, however, that Col. Arthur was a different man tête-à-tête. He was with him one evening after Council till twelve o'clock, toe to toe, until they had finished two bottles of port, . . .'

Dr. S— told me that he was once sent for to attend Mrs. Arthur when she was in a very alarming way. He was at Government House two, three, and four times a day . . . and by dint of the greatest care, and at the expense of a considerable portion of his time, effected a perfect cure. In the course of his attendance he was never asked to take a glass of wine, or other refreshment, and, when he announced to the little great man that the patient was restored, he was dismissed with thanks so cold that it chilled his heart to receive them . . .'

'S— said that Arthur, when he had any measure to effect, never dashed boldly at it, like the eagle soaring in the sunbeams, but set to work underground, like a mole, and, after you had been wondering where he was gone, and what he was doing, you discovered him rising out of the ground, after a subterranean, tortuous track, at the further end of the field . . .'

'B— spoke of Arthur's excessive unpopularity—said that he was universally disliked, that he had a most convenient memory, forgetting when it tended to his interest, and remembering on similar occasion. That Montagu, his nephew, railed against him as much as anybody, and that not a single solitary individual amongst all the Civil Officers placed the least confidence in him. That he treated those who were disposed to be his friends with coldness and neglect; at the same time he stood in awe of the Editor of a public newspaper, and would at any time give 1000 acres to stop the vituperation of a Murray, or a Gregson.'

'S—, as usual, full of Arthur's ill-treatment of him, Said that whenever he suggested a prosecution on the part of the Crown, Arthur attributed it to his desire to embroil him with the people and make him unpopular . . . He said

(1) For reasons which will be apparent I have, wherever possible, used initials of persons referred to.

he would write Home for another appointment, as there seemed no chance of Arthur's removal. If A. went to New South Wales to succeed General Bourke, he' (S—), 'would not go there.'

'The Government of the Colony is nominally vested in the Lt. Governor and an Executive Council. I say nominally, because the Executive Council, as a Body, is powerless. The real Government is composed of Col. Arthur, his two nephews, and Murray, the Editor of the "Tasmanian" newspaper.'

Strange to say, he throws doubt upon Arthur's understanding of the penal System:

'He relies' he says, 'upon others—indeed, the habit of viewing things with the eyes of others disqualifies him from profound and useful observation. For a little time it was supposed, though, as it turns out, erroneously, that he made use of his own. But, after trying Hamilton's Stephen's, and those of a few others, he has settled down into an absolute abandonment to his nephew's guidance, and is content to depend exclusively upon Capt. Forster's optical apparatus. When sojourning for a short period at the houses of Settlers in the interior, his eyes are not more likely to be cleared of the films of prejudice that obscure them than when recreating his pen and ink faculties in the Council Room at Government House. These people are aware of his peculiar and distorted way of considering the ramifications of prison discipline, and take care not to risk the loss of favour by citing instances, or volunteering information in the slightest degree opposed to his favourite theory. The Archbishop of Dublin, at a distance of 16000 miles from the experimental ground, is evidently much better instructed upon the real merits of the System than His Excellency himself, notwithstanding a residence of twelve years, and all the means and appliances to boot. So much for obstinacy and blindness . . .'. As to Arthur's relations with Lathrop Murray—he says:

'B— called upon me, and related an extraordinary interview that Murray had with his Ex., in the presence of Macdowell, at His Ex.'s request: His Ex.—"I wish to ask you, Mr. Murray, whether there is any truth in the report that I am on intimate terms with you?" Murray: "I beg to say that I do not consider it would add to my respectability if I visited Government House, I do not require any aid from the reputed intimacy of the nature alluded to, to improve or preserve, my standing in Society." or words to that effect.'

He relates the manner in which the news of Arthur's recall was received:

'N— looked in and asked me if I had heard the news, I replied in the negative. He then said that Col. Arthur was recalled . . . The Despatch was brought by the "Elphinstone", but only opened that morning. It was all over the town in half an hour. The news seemed to diffuse general joy.'

Then follows an account of the farewell Levée at Government House:

'I took leave of Col. Arthur. "Goodbye Mr. Boyes", said His Ex. in a tremulous tone. "How are Mrs. Boyes and the children? God bless you all." Immediately afterwards he walked from the Drawing Room, where he had taken leave of us, round by the verandah, leaning upon Mr. Pedder's arm, and weeping bitterly. Then up to the turning by the Courthouse and down Murray Street, to the New Wharf, followed by all the Public Officers, Civil and Military, and by several hundreds of the Townspeople—and embarked in the midst of cheers and under a Salute from the ships in the harbour.'

Before passing away from Col. Arthur, you may be interested to hear Mr. Boyes' account of the Campaign organized by Arthur against the aborigines, known as 'The Black Line'. It is contained in a letter, dated 31st October 1830, written to his wife, who was then in England: "Now"—he says—"for a little about the state of the Colony, which is at this time peculiarly interesting, being

pregnant with important results. By some mistake or other, the Aborigines of the Country (Blacks) have been led to look upon the white intruders with hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. I hope sincerely they have not been taught the trade of butchery, which they have been indiscriminately carrying on for the last two or three years, by those who, if they have so done, are a thousand times worse than the savages themselves. It is generally supposed that the whites, if not the original aggressors, have, by seizing on the black women, and otherwise ill-treating the wild and ignorant denizens of the forests, greatly contributed to aggravate the roused ferocity of their natures. However that may be, for a long time past they have been the dread of the Interior of the Island. They have murdered Storekeepers by dozens—they have rushed upon the cottage of the Settler, and consigned men, women and children to indiscriminate slaughter. Scarcely a white man has ever approached their haunts and escaped with life. Our papers were filled weekly with the atrocities of the Blacks, and it had become apparent that, unless means were devised for allaying the cruel spirit of these wretches or of making them prisoners in a body in some well-adapted part of the country, or of exterminating the race, that the country must be abandoned. All other means having been tried unsuccessfully, the Government found itself reduced to the second and third of the experiments just mentioned, and with that object in view the most vigorous and extensive measures have been taken that the resources of the Colony could put into operation. It appeared that if a line of posts were to be formed from the sea on the eastern coast to a certain district westward, the most active and dangerous of the tribes would be shut up in the south-eastern portion of the Island, and that by approximating the posts, quietly and steadily, to each other, advancing gradually at the same time southwards, the Blacks would be forced to retire, until driven to a neck of land which separates a considerable tract from the Main, forming almost an island; and then, assailed with all the collected strength, they would be obliged to seek shelter from the arms of their enemy by defiling through the narrow isthmus, which having once done, their capture would be considered effected. The spot is easily defended by a small party, and a depot is already established for supplying them with provisions, as it is evident that, cut off, as the Blacks would be in that situation from their natural resources, they would depend entirely upon the Government for food and protection, and thus in time be probably brought into a state of civilization, if of such they are capable. To do this we have all been obliged to contribute in some way or other. The Governor has taken the field with almost all the military; The ticket-of-leave men, Constables, and as many assigned servants as could be spared, have been marshalled, equipped for the field, and distributed, like the soldiers, along the line, or formed into parties scouring the Bush. Many of the young men, clerks in public offices, have put knapsacks on their backs, rations in their pouches, and guns upon their shoulders, and have marched, in charge of ten or twelve men each, to the destined scene of action. The military duties of the Town are performed by the inhabitants, generally officered by the most respectable, and, as I am one of the elect, if you had chanced to walk up the street at a propitious time, you might have seen "Capt. Boyes", as his men call him, though in truth he can only be a non-commissioned Officer upon his service, walking down the same street with half-a-dozen parti-coloured soldiers, with muskets and bayonets fixed, forming the relief. That Gentleman has now been four times on Duty, that is to say every sixth day and night. The Main Guard relieves at six in the morning, and remains on till six the next. It is very tiresome, and (to drop the third person singular for the first), I am quite sick of it. The strangers just landed from two or three ships from England stare at such an unusual sight of men in plain clothes performing military duties, with all their eyes.

It will continue, I am afraid, some weeks longer. The Governor is disposed to believe that his operations have been completely successful up to the present time, and I hope they have. They also believe that there are white men acting as leaders among the Blacks, and inciting them to atrocity. It is only lately that this impression has been received, and, if it should be true, it will account for many circumstances attending the movements of the Natives, which before were wrapped in mystery."

A few days later he writes:

'The Lt. Governor and the Forces, both Civil and Military, are still in the Bush. Nothing decisive has taken place, but there is now reason to believe that a considerable number of the Natives are enclosed, and will ultimately be made prisoners.'

Note.—As we all know, the Drive was a complete failure. It cost, all told, about £60,000, and the nett result was the capture of one man and a boy—and that was accidental!

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN

The next vice-regal figures to come under the spotlight in the Diary are Sir John Franklin, for whom he seems to have had a good deal of sympathy, and Lady Franklin of whom he speaks in terms of the highest admiration. His regard for Sir John, however, does not blind him to his defects as an Administrator, as will be seen from the following extracts:

'Saw N—. He adverted to a rumour of Sir John Franklin's desire to return to England, he being thoroughly sick of the complicated official labours, and the political discontents which wait upon his Government.' (This was in December 1837—barely eleven months after his triumphal arrival in January of that year)

'If', he adds, Sir John expected to slumber upon a bed of roses, fanned by balmy airs impregnated with "spicy odours from Araby the blest", or even exemption from the common crosses and vexations that attend even the ablest and most successful Administrator, he has, no doubt, been grievously disappointed. Had he brought with him some experienced, practical man of business, in whom he could have reposed confidence, his position here would have been happier As it is, I believe there is no hope for him but in retiring from a post for which, from all I can collect, he is totally unfitted.'

And again:

'Forster said that the Governor has got a "severe dressing" from the Treasury for interfering with the Customs He said it was the strongest expression of disapproval of a Governor's conduct he had ever seen, and desired His Ex for the future to refrain from meddling with the Customs, being a Department immediately under their Lordships' control.'

(This was followed, soon after, by another reproof to Sir John from the Treasury, in regard to arrangements made by him with the local Banks as to deposits of money from the Military Chest.)

'Saw Mitchell at the Colonial Secretary's office, who was amusing at the expense of poor Sir John, whose nervousness and utter unfitness for business seems to form a stock of diversion for both Master and Man.' And here is a glimpse of Sir John's delight in the visit of Captains Ross and Crozier: 'At Government House. Sir John enthusiastic about the discovery ships—the "Erebus" and "Terror", He was quite warmed into enthusiasm, and spoke with such delight about the experiments and consequent calculations made by the Commanding Officers that he never looked to such advantage before.' But in matters of business and administration poor Sir John was rather at the mercy of his advisers: 'Thinking over all that passed between Sir John and myself the day before yesterday, it appears that

he has adopted the likings and dislikings, the opinions, views, sentiments, and even the very words, of those who are supposed to take the trouble of thinking for him.

All this time, while the self-deceived Ruler is merely giving utterance to the thoughts, and acting upon the subtle suggestions of his crafty advisers, he—honest man—flatters himself—nay believes—that in all he says and does he depends upon his own judgment alone, and that his mind is perfectly untrammelled, and thoroughly independent of all extraneous influences whatsoever.'

Sir John, as you know, was a little deaf, and probably got bored, as other people sometimes do, at meetings, such as we are attending to-night.

Here, for instance, is a picture of him at a meeting of our precursor, the Tasmanian Society: 'A paper was read on New Zealand—very badly, and so prosily that it sent Sir John to sleep. He snored, and blew like a grampus.'

I am sure many of you will sympathise with him.

About this time the trouble between Sir John and his Colonial Secretary, John Montagu, which had been brewing for some months past, was coming to a head, and there are frequent references to it in the Diary:

'From E— I heard that Montagu appeared out of spirits. Sir John has a fine game in his hands, if he knew how to play his cards, but, notwithstanding the abetting and encouraging of Lady Franklin, Henslowe' (Private Secretary), 'and young Bedford, I suspect he will forego all his advantages and make an inglorious peace with the offended power, by admitting he was wrong, and soliciting oblivion for the past. I have taken no part in the business, and do not intend to take any. If inclined to mix in the intrigues of a Government House, Sir John, with many good qualities, is about the last to trust oneself with. You could not calculate upon his coalescence for a week together, unless he could be kept in a constant state of excitement.'

'One thing is quite clear. He has reposed too much upon the zeal and fidelity of Montagu and Forster, and now finds that he has been altogether mistaken in them.'

Soon after this Montagu was dismissed, and there is this entry:

'When I left my office at four, the news had spread like wildfire. G— and S— said that all the Settlers would rejoice at M's dismissal, and would consider that Sir John by this vigorous step had completely redeemed his character.'

(Mr. Boyes was immediately appointed Colonial Secretary in Montagu's place.)

After an interview with Forster he remarks that the latter had told him that Lord Stanley was puzzled over Sir John's contradictory Despatches about Montagu and himself, and had naturally said, 'Which of them am I to believe—this, or the former? They cannot both be true, for they are diametrically opposite in character'. Towards the end of the conversation Forster said that if Sir John did not go, he (F) should. He said that the person who had written the Despatches was the one to blame, and not Sir John, who, he said, 'Would sign anything put before him.'

In January 1843 arrived the Despatch which was fatal to Sir John's Government. On this the comment is: 'The Despatch is written in a pert, inconclusive style, insulting to a degree—becoming a Lordship, possible, but beneath a Gentleman: and if what is said be true, that a copy of it was transmitted to Montagu, as the Secretary of State's decision in his case, nothing but His Lordship receiving half a dozen shots from "Old Blowhard" can expiate the deep offence.'

The appearance and circulation in the Colony of Montagu's 'Book', in which he had set out his Case against Franklin, had created a tremendous amount of excitement, and greatly annoyed Sir John:

'He is much disturbed', says the Diary, 'with a report that there is a Manuscript Book in this Colony, containing the whole of Montagu's "Case", as he puts it, and the conversations that took place between him and Sir John, including a long letter from the Rev. Fry' (Rector of St. George's Church), 'saying many things that must now jar on his ear, as he, of course, never expected this communication would come back to the Colony. Friends or foes, they are all served up, to suit Montagu's pleasure or convenience, with a selfish recklessness that I know no other man capable of.'

(Montagu had sent the Book out by Bicheno to Forster, with directions that when he had read it he was to forward it on to Swanston, Manager of the Derwent Bank, for private circulation among his friends.)

Sir John wrote to Swanston, calling upon him to shew him the Book, but the request was not complied with: 'He was very indignant with Montagu, Swanston, and all those who had read the book, and particularly against John Kerr, who had read it and would not tell him the contents.'

After this, events moved swiftly—Sir Eardley Wilmot arrived, and there was nothing left for the Franklins but to pack up and go.

On November 3rd 1843 they took their departure, after the presentation of a farewell address: 'Poor Sir John. He seemed to feel deeply this last public testimony of regard. At five, or a little after, we left his house. The Bishop on his right, Bicheno on his left, and immediately following him, in a cross line, the Attorney General, Maclean, old Bedford, the Archdeacon, Bagot, Fraser, Henslowe, and myself—surrounded by about 2000 people, who rent the air, and made the welkin ring with their shouts. The Brigade Major, in full Staff Dress, walked at the head of the procession, a few paces in advance of Sir John. As the Barge shoved off, a Salute was fired from the Prince of Wales Battery. The Barge was steered by Moriarty in his full dress as a Commander of the Navy.'

LADY FRANKLIN

One of Montagu's chief charges against Sir John Franklin was that he permitted his wife to interfere in public affairs. We have had a hint of this already, and there are other entries which seem to indicate that there may have been some foundation for the accusation: Here is one: 'Dined at Government House. Took Lady Franklin in, and in the course of the evening talked to her upon the following subjects—The Executive Council, as now constituted, permitting every question to go one way, the Colonel commanding' (Col. Elliott) 'being nobody, and Turnbull being completely under the influence of the others; Burnett's coming out, and considering what his position would be in the Executive Council. She agreed with me.' And another:

'The Lt. Governor brought in, to show Lady Franklin and myself, a letter he had written to Major St. Maur at Launceston, about an indiscretion of Mr. Breton. Lady Franklin suggested that he add a paragraph that he, Sir John, notwithstanding the indiscretion, should not feel less disposed than before to give the Launceston people every assistance in his power.'

Of her character he speaks in the highest terms, notably in his account of her anxiety about the fate of Bastian and party, who had gone to their rescue during their trip to the West Coast: 'Dined at Government House . . . in the course of the evening I had a good deal of conversation with Lady Franklin about Bastian and his party. She was very much moved at contemplating their probable fate, and burst into tears while talking about them.'

The next day he received from her a letter on the same subject:

'This generous, kindhearted woman is full of the most painful apprehensions for their safety, and implored me, if I could suggest any measure possessing the slightest claim to the probability of affording them relief, or, at the worst, of determining their fate, to adopt it at once, and how gladly—oh, how gladly—she would bear the expense, whatever it was. She begged I would not allow any consideration of that nature to weigh with me for a moment. It was horror itself to think of leaving those poor, gallant fellows to perish, who had undertaken their dangerous, and, she was afraid, disastrous enterprise, to rescue Sir John and herself from the perils with which they had been surrounded. She should never forgive herself if it afterwards appeared that there had been some means left untried

'She is certainly a noble creature—she deplored the conditions of the lost party in terms so eloquent, and yet so true to the heart, that I became as much moved as herself.' (The Bastian party was rescued in the end.)

Lady Franklin was of course greatly worried about the Montagu affair and its reactions on her husband. Soon after the arrival of Mr. J. E. Bicheno appears this entry: 'She came to the determination of asking Bicheno whether he had any reason to believe that a successor was appointed, or about to be appointed, to Sir John. She did make the inquiry, and Bicheno told her that he had no doubt about it.'

SIR JOHN EARDLEY EARDLEY-WILMOT, BART.

The next figure to come upon the stage at Government House was of a type very different from his predecessors.

In August 1843, before Franklin had relinquished his post—even before he had received official notification of his recall—there arrived, like a bolt from the blue, his successor—Sir John Eardley Eardley-Wilmot, Bart., of Berkswell Hall, County of Warwick, formerly M.P. for North Warwickshire, and Chairman of Quarter Sessions of the County of Warwick. His ship had overshot the mouth of the Derwent, and landed him on Forestier Peninsula, before anyone knew of his advent. At 2 a.m. Bicheno, the Colonial Secretary, was roused out of bed by a messenger who said that His Excellency was travelling overland from the East Coast, and would reach Hobart Town that evening.

In spite of the awkward fact that Sir John Franklin was still in Government House, things seemed to have passed off very well, in an atmosphere of cordiality. The usual addresses were presented, the usual Levée held, and the Franklins retired to a private house

But these happy conditions did not last for long, and before six months had passed it was apparent that the relations between Sir Eardley and his Colonial Secretary, (the Chief Executive Officer of the Colony) were becoming strained, and the sticklers for vice-regal propriety were beginning to raise their eyebrows, and to whisper in corners about His Excellency's lack of dignity and decorum.

'There can be no hope', says the Diary, 'of a steady, effective administration, when the two chief personages differ essentially in policy, and take no pains to hide their want of unanimity.' And again: 'Saw Bicheno, and advised him to see and consult His Ex more often. I hope he will, or there will be no chance against that unprincipled, intriguing, ambitious fellow Foster, to whose opinion Sir Eardley defers upon every occasion.'

A little later, after an interview with Sir Eardley, he says:

'He went on in a course of unqualified vituperation against Bicheno. He declared that there was nothing done—that he could get no information from the office; that he could not possibly go on with such a clog upon his government . . .

altogether I have never heard such a collection of inconsistencies and unconnected matters rattled through in my life before. He skims the surface of his subjects, just picking up the light rubbish swimming on the top. He does not appear to me to have the capacity of going deeper, or making himself master of the facts in any case. Judgment, prudent reserve, discretion, are qualities to which he seems an utter stranger. I am told that wherever he is, he carries on this silly gossip with old men, or young wives, or daughters. In short, it is hardly possible to imagine a person so utterly disqualified by an absence of all the elements of wisdom for a Governor. Forster, I understand, says that he will not be here twelve months longer.'

There are other entries in the same strain, relating to the Governor's efforts to curtail expenditure in the civil administration, which were naturally resented; to his relations with Bishop Nixon and the Rev. Ewing; to his troubles with the Legislative Council, which, as you know, culminated in the resignation of "The Patriotic Six"; and to other matters, on which I cannot now dwell. Those of you, who are interested, will find the whole subject of Sir Eardley's administration ably and dispassionately dealt with by Mrs. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, in an article published in 1940 in the Magazine "Historical Studies" Vol. I. No. 1, p. 31.

On August 25th, 1846—three years after his arrival, at a meeting of the Council, Sir Eardley announced to the Members that he had been recalled.

'He was much agitated', says the Diary, 'towards the close of the address, when he spoke of the kindness he had received from many in the Colony Poor Sir Eardley! Could he have known, before he started from England, that he had been selected by Lord Stanley as the chief instrument in the solution of one of the most difficult of human problems, perhaps he would have hesitated before he accepted the offered honour of the Government of Van Diemen's Land, and embarked upon the almost boundless and turbulent ocean of difficulties, with which that honour was attended.'

There is no doubt that Sir Eardley's treatment by Mr. Gladstone preyed upon his health and spirits. He became ill, and, barely six months after his recall, died at Hobart, in the little cottage behind the Museum, then occupied by the Governor's Private Secretary. He was buried at St. David's Cemetery (now St. David's Park) and the graceful Gothic Monument to his memory, still standing there, was erected by public subscription.

SIR WILLIAM DENISON

The last of these vice-regal portraits etched for us in the Diary is that of Sir William Denison, who arrived in Van Diemen's Land in January 1847, shortly before the death of Sir Eardley Wilmot. He was a retired Captain of the Corps of Royal Engineers, who had had considerable experience in the construction of docks and other naval works for the Admiralty—an experience of which this Island reaped the benefit during his administration. He was a man of strong personality and was subject to seizures, which probably affected his temper, and may have been responsible for the occasional outbreaks of intolerance and arrogance referred to in the pages of the Diary. The first manifestation of this occurred a few days after his arrival when Mr. Boyes had the unpleasant duty of informing him that he was not entitled to half salary from the date of his embarkation, at which 'he did not seem particularly well-pleased', to put it mildly.

One of the legacies left him by his predecessor was the settlement of the battle raging over the withdrawal of the Patriotic Six from the Council, and the legality or otherwise of the appointment of their successors. The new Governor indicated that he had determined to dispense with the services of the substitutes,

and to call upon the original Members to resume their seats. This gave great offence to the new Members, who felt that 'they had been grossly insulted, and their feelings deeply hurt.'

His next step was to insist upon drastic retrenchments in the civil Departments—a step which made him extremely unpopular:

'If'—says the Diary—'the Public Officers in the Colonies are to depend upon the whim or caprice of each Governor who succeeds to the administration, for permission to continue in the exercise of their offices and the enjoyment of the emoluments belonging to them, then these gentlemen have good reason to complain of broken faith on the part of the Home Government, for, in the case supposed, the Queen's appointment is not worth a farthing. This would be bad enough in England, among a man's own friends and relations, but here, at 16000 miles off, to be deprived of his salary, or even to suffer a diminution of it, is, in nine cases out of ten, absolute ruin'

'It is really too bad,' he goes on, 'to consign over a parcel of unoffending, loyal men to the mercy of a rude, malicious, captious, petty tyrant. If Mr. Gladstone was constrained, by family or friendly obligations, to appoint such a man, it should have been to a Government upon the African Coast—a Settlement in the Bight of Benin, at the mouth of the Niger, would have been a proper place for his protégé—for, when he had driven away all the civilized beings, he might have found exercise for his heart and mind upon the Niggers. Sir Eardley was a gentle, humane, peaceable Governor, a very House Lamb—compared with the present Our friend is certainly a sneering, captious, arrogant, tyrannical fellow as ever belonged to the Army.'

Soon after this tirade he tells us that 'The Lt. Governor had an attack of his old complaint, and fell down in the street this morning, almost in front of the Commissariat. He was alone, and strangers picked him up and carried him to a Public House close at hand.'

The Governor was very angry over the rejection by the Council of The Schools Enactment Bill:

'He said that if he was beaten this year he would bring it on the next, and continue to do so till he had carried it.'

Then the Roads Bill was thrown out:

'O'Connor said it was preposterous for a young man like the Governor to come here, and, before he knew anything of the people or the country, to attempt to cram such a Bill down the throats of the Council.'

Another entry, a few days later, throws further light upon Sir William's irascibility. The Commissioner of the Court of Requests at Launceston (Mr. Knight) had ventured to question the validity of a Bill which had been introduced by His Excellency:

'His Majesty, on looking at the letter, sprang from his chair, assumed a violently hostile attitude towards poor Bicheno, and, as soon as the burst of anger could find utterance, roared out 'DAMN HIM. KICK HIM OUT. TURN HIM OUT INSTANTLY—HE IS A FOOL AND AN ASS.'—After a time, during which the explosive force exhausted itself, Bicheno mildly ventured to question the propriety of turning a man out of office for merely holding a different opinion from His Excellency upon a point of Law—that man, too, being a Lawyer. But nothing for a long time, could soothe him into reason, and he kept repeating 'Damn him. Kick him out. He is an Ass—a Fool.' In the end, after the lava had boiled over and ceased to flow, he listened with some degree of patience to Bicheno's proposal that he should quietly take the opinion of the Law Officers upon the subject, and for the present say no more about it. So ended the last eruption.'

There are, of course, many entries about convicts and their treatment, and on the merits and defects of the Penal System, on which I do not propose to dwell. But the writer's experiences and trials with convict servants are worth recording, because they show, unconsciously, what was probably the attitude of most people towards that unhappy class:

'Both my prisoners servants', he writes, 'took themselves off about one o'clock, and I found them, at four, in the Public House opposite. Sent them to the Watch-house, and next day at the Police Court one was sent to the treadmill for 48 hours, and the other discharged. Called at the Police Office and preferred a charge against the gardener for drunkenness. He was sent to solitary cells for 48 hours, upon bread and water—'A very salutary discipline'—he adds—'and if administered every fortnight would be attended with much benefit to the moral and physical health of most assigned servants.'

There was, of course, another side to the picture, as will be seen from the following entries: 'Having applied to the Assignment Board for a prisoner servant, you are recommended to await the arrival of the next ship, which advice, having no choice, you are constrained to take.

The ship at last comes to an anchor, and, soon after, you have the most satisfactory evidence that your application has not been overlooked in the appearance of a hopeful youth, in a new suit of solemn grey and vivid yellow, and under the charge of one of those respectable characters who are paid 2/- a day by the Government for lounging about the streets all day long, with a short club in their jacket pockets—and twice that amount by the Public House keepers, for passing their doors without looking in, or, being in, for seeing nothing but the colour of the liquor they are about to swallow.

A receipt for the gentleman in the parti-coloured dress being delivered, he is at once upon your establishment.

In your application you had carefully described the qualifications you required—"a House Servant, who could wait at table"—and you are now agreeably surprised by finding, domesticated under your roof, for better or worse, a Cornish ploughboy, who had never seen a Mahogany table in his life, and who was expatriated for attempting a few gaudy bandanas at St. Just Fair However, you have already upon your establishment two or three other members of the tardigrade tribe, and this last accession to your numerical strength *must* be a House Servant, and *must* wait at table In about six months from that time, and just as the unfortunate tiller of the Cornish soil—(all rogues being unfortunate when they are caught out)—is beginning, at a fearful cost, to make himself useful—having in the experimental process utterly destroyed a China Dinner Service, chipped and broken £15 worth of Cut Glass, scratched your Plate with sandpaper, and used the furniture brushes in scrubbing, with the aid of soap and water, the French polish off your tables and sideboard—you receive a Note from that very respectable Personage, the Principal Superintendent, requesting you will be good enough to dispense with the young man's services the Government having it in contemplation to make him a Constable, for which situation he has been strongly recommended to the Chief Police Magistrate After an interval of a few months, during which your family must wait upon one another—if they must be waited upon at all—you are exposed to new trials of pain and patience At the end of the year, if you keep any accounts, you come to the conclusion that, after all, the unpaid services of compulsive labour are not so desirable, in point of economy, or, indeed, in point of convenience, as you have been led to expect, notwithstanding the very clever Despatches of Sir George Arthur to the contrary, written before his Title was conferred.'

And here are a few scenes which were not infrequent in the domestic menage: "Regatta Day". Servants all drunk, of course, and the gardener gave Ann a thrashing in the kitchen, to prove his love for her, and enmity to a supposed rival. The gardener and the women servants were all drunk, and would not go to bed till 3 a.m., in spite of anything their Mistress could say to them . . . Servants drunk again. Williams, the Constable, whose wife was drunk and would not go to bed, finding his patience exhausted, got up about 11 O'clock, dragged her out of the kitchen, where she was rattling away with Davis, and gave her a good thrashing.'

And the following incident, which shows the moral effect of the Convict ship 'Anson', on which female prisoners were kept pending Assignment: 'About 11 o'clock there was a tremendous uproar in the kitchen and about the door. A young woman, not long in the Colony, and only one little month from the wholesale "Abstergent of Vice" the Anson, had become most heroically drunk. Braving all the authorities, the Police in particular, there she was, keeping Benjamin, Thomas, and the gardener, at arms length, and the kitchen to herself—screaming, dancing, howling and insulting a poor little Constable, who had made his appearance, with a Musket, to take her away. I walked up and down the verandah to prevent her entering the house, and it certainly did occur to me that she every now and then compelled the little Constable, Musket and all, to join in her gymnastic exercises. I was obliged to send for more assistance, but it was upwards of two hours before they reached the Watchhouse. They were obliged to lash her into a wheelbarrow, and, while in transit, the whole Welkin rang with her shrieks and imprecations. When before the Magistrate next morning, Esdaile, the District Constable declared that in the course of twenty years he had never heard such language, or anything approaching it, proceed from the mouth of a woman. It must be remembered'—he adds—'that she had just become entitled, under the excellent regulations of the "Anson", to the privilege of going into private service. What a valuable character to have in a family of young ladies and gentlemen.'

(Next day, the unfortunate woman got three months in the Factory—two with Hard Labour, and one in a Solitary Cell.) . . .

And there are a host of minor characters who play their parts in this colorful Pageant of Van Diemen's Land Society. One after another, from the Chief Justice on the Bench to the convict servant in the kitchen, they have their exits and their entrances, and sometimes the writer takes us behind the scenes, and shows them to us in their dressing rooms, without their make-up—a sorry spectacle indeed. We see the Machiavellian Montagu and his brother-in-law Matthew Forster—once the dominating figure of his day, but now only a name upon a crumbling tombstone in a disused Cemetery: James Ebenezer Bicheno, the genial Colonial Secretary—more like a jovial farmer than a politician—fat and smiling, fond of good living and good company, ever ready to oblige with a song, and annoyed with his portrait by Bock, which he complained 'made him look like a Bishop, or a stall-fed ox, dosing after a meal.'

And Bishop Nixon, fussing over the Exhibition of pictures at the old Customs House (the first exhibition of its kind ever held in Australia), bustling about, running up and down the stairs, chattering to everybody, as if his reputation as a Connoisseur of the Fine Arts depended upon its success; or at other times irritating Mr. Boyes by his neighbourly habit of borrowing his horse whenever he had any heavy work to be done at Runnymede, though he had horses of his own, eating their heads off in his stables.

And Joseph Allport, the great-grandfather of our esteemed Vice-President, of whom he says this:

'Certainly the most able, most experienced, and most successful manager of all disputed cases. I would prefer him professionally to any of the Bar. He is remarkably clear-headed, and possesses an inexhaustible stock of impudence and self-sufficiency, which nothing can put down.'

And Captain Wentworth, of the 63rd Regt., making a scene at Government House, because his hat had been crushed, and, forgetting where he was, abusing the House, the Governor, politics, establishment, Colony, and everything else, until Capt. Forth had to intervene for the honour of the Service and of Vice-Royalty; And Col. Logan, also of the 63rd, with his interminable, pointless stories at the dinnertable, stifling all conversation, so that even professional talkers had to give in, either in despair or disgust; 'Holy Willie' Bedford and his son, the Doctor: G. W. Evans, the Surveyor-General: the artists Glover, Bock, Simpkinson and Wainwright—and a multitude of other figures, who flit across the stage and vanish into the wings in bewildering succession.

But time is running on, and I must pass to other aspects of social life depicted in the Diary.

Among the duties entailed by Mr. Boyes' official position was that of attending parties at Government House, and his description of some of these is worth quoting:

At an afternoon given by the Arthurs 'there was a great assemblage, over 200. The front verandah was latticed in, and the open spaces of woodwork filled up with roses, geraniums, and native shrubs—and the company on both sides of the tables extended the whole length. The Governor, after his health had been drunk, rose and made a neat speech about friends and enemies—delicately allusive to the manner in which some few of his hearers had been in the habit of treating him.'

At another, given by the Franklins:

'An evening party, about 450 present; came away about 2 o'clock heartily tired with the bad supper, bad dancing, stupid people, and the clouds of dust.'

And the Birthday Ball of the Denisons:

'It was much crowded, very dusty, indeed almost to suffocation, and altogether very disagreeable. The young women were extremely plain, and such dowdies—where could they have come from? From the Mother Country, I suspect, or else from the far west of the northern side of the Island—on the wrong, uncivilised side of Deloraine. They were never born in the reclaimed districts.' At another—'The Young Beauties, in White Muslin', were sitting or reclining in clusters about the room, fresh and fair as a rich bed of roses, raising their delicate heads above the light wreaths of a June snowfall.'

And while on the subject of dress,—here is an amusing comment on the recently introduced fashion of wearing a bustle, taken from a letter written to his wife in 1831—(she was then in England.)—'By the bye, do you wear a bustle? This article of female attire excited considerable surprise and speculation among the Goths and Vandals of Van Diemen's Land, when it made its first appearance among us. We do not at all understand upon what principle of Political Economy so extraordinary a protuberance had proceeded'

Private entertaining was much more frequent than it is to-day, and dances and dinner parties were common. Here is a description of a fancy dress Ball given by Mrs. Alfred Stephen, wife of the Attorney General: 'Cartwright' (the Solicitor), 'upon my addressing him in Spanish, taking him to be intended for a Muleteer, told me very candidly that he was a Swiss Peasant, but spoke no language but English, and that, I discovered, only indifferently. Allport' (Joseph) 'was admirable as a Chinaman A Mr. Nicholas exhibited himself in a Court

dress of George I., with tin buttons on his coat as large as breakfast plates. There were Scottish Chiefs, and Hungarian Brothers, and, by way of experiment, a few had attempted the disguise of *Gentlemen*, in which it is clear they failed, since they were invariably known at a glance.

But the treat of the evening was Moore, the Collector of Internal Revenue—a fat, clumsy-built man, with large head and red face. His daughters had dressed him as a Spanish Grandee, in heavy, woollen garments and cloak, topped by a broad-brimmed hat of black, glazed Calico, to look like Satin, and an unwieldy plume of white ostrich feathers. Owing to the heat, greasy matter oozed out at every pore, and his face seemed to have been anointed with cocoa-nut oil. He could not wipe it, for fear of wiping off his moustachios and blackened eyebrows It is some time since I laughed so much. I left at 4 a.m. and at that time fresh candles had been placed in the Chandeliers, and they were whisking off in a waltz.'

Then there is a dinner at Dr. Barnard's: 'Two of the men, who had miserable voices, sat for at least two hours before the piano, howling forth deplorable ditties, which they pretended to be beautiful duets from the Operas of "I. Puritani", "Don Giovanni", Il Barbiere di Seviglia", &c. No strains I ever heard were half so dismal and dolorous, not even those of a dog baying to the moon, or owls making their complaints to it.'

And an evening party at the Rev. Ewing's at Newtown: 'Among others present were Mrs. Fereday, the Tasmanian Nightingale, and her Showman—a tall, elderly, round-shouldered Engineer, Capt. Twiss, to wit—and his Lady. Everybody seemed exhausted with the civil things they were obliged to utter, after cudgelling their brains for something new. Mrs. Ewing, in despair, borrowed a complimentary speech from the Bishop, and found it answer very well. These Stars, by throwing every other voice into insignificance, and discouraging all attempts, by the way they excel, spoil the parties, and make the evening pass as stupidly as if it were a funeral, rather than merry-making.

And here is a picture of one of the young dandies of Hobart Town:

'One of the W—s dined with us—a conceited, empty-headed young man—all shining in silk stock, with silk lining to his coat, satin waistcoat, and oily hair, together with a liberal sprinkling of gold pins and chains. These Colonial chaps—"Gumsuckers", as they are not inappropriately called—are my aversion—puffed up with the success of his father, since he quitted the boot and shoe line in England—without education, or manners, having no ideas beyond a partial and faint glimmer of something supplied by another—without conversation and without the slightest knowledge of his defects.'

Then comes an entertaining description of a sitting of the Court of Quarter Sessions, presided over by Mr. Joseph Hone⁽¹⁾; (Master of the Supreme Court):

'He appears to know as little about the Law as any of us. He is extremely slow and tiresome. The diabolical faces that he is constantly exhibiting, the awkward, abrupt manner of addressing the witnesses, Counsel, and prisoners—the contraction of the fingers of the right hand, while at the same time his arm is raised as though he was about to claw the Crown Solicitor's pate—altogether he is the constant laughing-stock of the people, many of whom go to the Court for no other purpose than the amusement afforded by the Chairman, which occasionally is quite equal to that of Punch and Joan.

(1) The following Inscription is to be found on the Tomb of Joseph Hone in St. David's Cemetery.—
'For the period of 37 years he held various important judicial and magisterial appointments in this Colony, of which he discharges his duties with exemplary industry and ability, and spotless integrity. In private life he was an example of the domestic virtues of unenlightened and Christian charity.

In pace quiescit'

The witnesses—a Mr. and Mrs. M— of New Norfolk—each weighing about 23 stone, came by separate vehicles, being too bulky to travel in the same gig. Hannah Shaw—tall, thin, and scraggy—common, evidently, by birth rejoiced in the interior of a straw bonnet of most ample dimensions, tastefully, and somewhat elaborately, decorated with deep blue ribbons. A shawl was thrown carefully over her shoulders, resplendent with flowers of gold and scarlet. ‘She knew Mr. M’s stockings by the size; they would not fit anybody else—she never washed such large stockings as Mr. M’s.’ . . . Another case for stealing a handkerchief:

‘The Prosecutrix—one of Egypt’s dark daughters—with sharp features, appeared in a white cap, secured under the chin with a black riband. A Mrs. Elizabeth Clark was very politely handed up to the witness box by her husband. The lady, who had been unhappy in the preservation of her teeth, wore a light dress, richly flowered—the upper portion concealed by a black silk veil and tippet. She had on a straw bonnet, tied with pink ribbon, white gloves, and a Cambric pocket-handkerchief in her hand. A parasol with a mother-of-pearl handle completed her equipment.’ . . .

Of the general tone of Society he has little good to say:

‘The people of this Colony very much resemble the Americans in their presumption, arrogance, ignorance, and conceit. They believe they are the most remarkable men on the Globe, and that their little Island “whips all Creation”. They are all Radicals of the worst kind, and their children are brought up in the belief that all Governments are bad—that they are deprived of their rights, and that they are ground and depressed by the Mother Country, and mocked by the Officers sent out from England to rule them. Their views are all of the narrowest and most selfish kind. They are incapable of any generous sentiment, and ever ready to impute the basest motives to their fellow colonists. Lying, slandering, envy, hatred, and malice are their daily aliment, and the consumption is incredible.’

Duelling had not altogether gone out of fashion in those days, and he gives us an amusing description of one such encounter:

‘Murray—an old, brave military officer . . . appeared on the ground in a *shooting jacket*—certainly a very appropriate dress.

His antagonist (Moore) in *deep Mourning*—equally appropriate, as signification of his feelings. The latter had made his Will, and on his way to what his apprehension looked upon as a field of slaughter, earnestly commended his wife—six feet high—and his two sons and three daughters, fast rising to the same altitude, to the care of the little Doctor’ (Bedford) . . . ‘Moore had the first fire, took it, and missed. He had then to wait a second, with evident anxiety, while Murray deliberately raised his pistol, took his aim, and sent the ball with a crack—into the stump of a tree, a yard or two distant from his opponent. This caused Moore to jump, not being quite certain whether the deadly bullet had entered the body of the tree, or *his own* . . . Moore expressed himself as quite satisfied with the result of the hostile meeting, and left the ground a different man from that he had come.’

CONCLUSION

We must bid farewell to this absorbing Commentary on Old Van Diemen’s Land. I cannot close its pages, however, without quoting a passage, which reveals an aspect of the writer’s character, of which we have hitherto heard little. It is his rhapsody over the view from the top of the Domain at Hobart:

‘I looked down’ he says ‘upon my own residence, and could see my children nay, hear their glad voices, as they pursued their mimic games through the walks of the garden’

The sun was sinking fast behind a lofty hill upon my left, throwing golden gleams upon the green ridges of the cultivated grounds that were already draped in the mantle of Spring, and upon the precipitous masses of rock and wood-covered wilds that bound the opposite side of the river. Before and beyond the tongue of land that forms the Government Domain, the placid water lay deep below, without a ripple upon its surface. The course of the stream was traced for miles, here and there showing its cool, silver face as it made its tortuous way among the island-looking shores, till it was lost in the blue, conical hills, that with their tender outline terminated the view. A fine mass of shadow, lay beneath the sunny sky, broken here and there, by the cold green fields, from which the light of day was fast receding, and by the thin blue vapour that crept lazily up from beneath the trees, masking, here, the Mansion of the rich Banker who holds pecuniary dominion over a moiety of the Island, and there the splendid Asylum, which a humane and wise Government has erected for the young and destitute orphans . . .

A few years since, the sun went down as gloriously, the waters were as placid and silvery, the air as soft and balmy. Mountains and valleys were in the positions they now occupy; but the foot of civilized Man had never trod the gloomy, interminable forest. Nature had then, apparently, been lavish of her treasures in vain—the Kangaroo, the Emu and the Opossum afforded, perhaps, a precarious subsistence to the native children of the woods But, if there were less Happiness, according to our notions of its constituents, there was, no doubt, infinitely less Misery.'