
Report
on
Convict Discipline, &c.

By

Alex. Maconochie. R. N.

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Letter to Sir John Franklin,
accompanying
Report on Convict Discipline, &c.

Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land.
20th May 1837.

Sir,

Your Excellency is aware that before I left England I was requested by the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, to direct my attention particularly to the working of the Convict System maintained in these Colonies, and to correspond with it on the subject. And also that Sir George Grey concurred in this wish, on condition however, that my communications should not be addressed direct to the Society, but should be transmitted through you to the Secretary of State, and be placed first at his absolute disposal.

To assist my enquiries, also, a series of questions, suggested by the Society, was transmitted by the Secretary of State, which Your Excellency has referred to the proper officers, but to which answers have not yet been received.

I have, however, in the meanwhile, prepared the annexed Statement of my unassisted impressions, which I should

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should be much obliged by Your Excellency's forwarding as thus directed.

It would be illustrated by the answers to the questions referred to; and still more perhaps by the comments on it of the Members of the Executive Council and such other individuals of the Colony as Your Excellency may be pleased first to communicate it to. But as it regards the principles rather than the details of the existing Convict-Management, these Documents need not be transmitted unless you think proper.

I regret that the conclusions to which my observations have led, should be so extremely unfavourable, as they will be here found, to the present Convict System.

But Your Excellency will probably recollect, that when speculating on this at a distance I was very differently impressed; and that in all our conversations during the passage out, regarding the controversy between Archbishop Whately and Colonel Arthur on the subject, I uniformly supported the latter's views. I have not consequently been led to what may be considered a mean between these writers by any previous prejudice, but solely by facts and principles which, set forth, as I have here attempted to place them, seem to me altogether irresistible. And I am certain that I cannot recommend the views to which they have thus conducted me more strongly to Your Excellency's attentive consideration, and that of His Majesty's Government at home, than by adding that, if correct, they appear to have a high moral & religious as well as political interest.

I have the honor to be &c. &c.

A. Macnochie.