

VAN DIEMEN'S
LAND.

Lieut.-gov. Arthur
to Lord Goderich.

Rum is now sold at from 3 s. 6 d. to 4 s. 6 d. per gallon wholesale, the duty is 7 s. 6 d., and the retailer vends it at from 11 s. to 15 s., and the imposition of 1 s. 6 d. per gallon in addition would raise the retail price about 2 s., and it would sell at from 13 s. to 17 s. per gallon. Seven or eight years ago the money price of labour was lower, though rum then bore a duty of 10 s. per gallon, and was sold at 20 s. and upwards; the capacity of the labourer, therefore, to purchase this spirit has been, up to the present time, increasing in ratio.

It is complained of in England, and is well known to your Lordship, that convicts free by servitude are enabled, out of their surplus wages, to indulge in debauchery, while the innocent are in comparative starvation in their native country. An increase of the present tax on spirits, by diminishing the capacity of the freed convict to indulge in drunkenness, would therefore keep down crime in England, and, what is better, tend indirectly to rescue many helpless families from misery by enabling them to migrate. Such an increase would, I anticipate, more than cover the deficiency apprehended in the ordinary revenue on account of an impost upon the labour of prisoners holding tickets of leave.

— No. 2. —

Extract of a DESPATCH from Lieut.-governor *Arthur*, addressed to Viscount *Goderich*; dated Government-house, Van Diemen's Land, 28 June 1832.

Lieut.-gov. Arthur
to Lord Goderich.

NEVER having experienced it, you cannot, my Lord, have an idea of the vexations which accompany the employment of convicts, or of the vicissitudes attendant upon their assignment; their crimes and misconduct involve the settlers in daily trouble, expense and disappointment.

The discipline and control of the convicts in Van Diemen's Land is carried, perhaps, to a higher degree than could ever have been contemplated. The colony may be traversed from one end to the other, by day or by night, with the most perfect safety; and the community, without reference to political feeling, affords the Government steady support in upholding a system, which they have the good sense to perceive is intimately blended with their personal security; many of the convicts also become greatly reformed when in the service of considerate and judicious masters. But with all this abatement, there is so much peculation, so much insubordination, insolence, disobedience of lawful orders, and so much drunkenness, that reference to the magisterial authority is constant, and always attended with loss of time and expense to the settler. If the case indeed be a serious one, and the prisoner be committed to take his trial, the master, or some member of his family, with perhaps two or three servants, is brought from the interior to appear before the Supreme Court, or Sessions, at a considerable direct charge, in addition to the injury which is sustained by his absence from his family and from his property; and this is felt to be so burthensome that there can be no question things appear better in the colony than they really are, for, in numberless instances, masters are known to submit to peculation rather than incur the additional expense of prosecuting their servants.

Again, your Lordship may readily conceive that all cannot go on smoothly on the first assignment of convicts: 200 felons, after having been for long periods under the confinement in the gaols or hulks in England, and subsequently pent up on board a transport, are placed in the charge of the masters or their agents, to whom they have been assigned, and who are required to pay down 20 s. for the suit of slop-clothing which is given to each convict on debarkation. The master has then to take the convict to his home (either to the other extremity of the island, a distance of 140 miles or nearer, as the case may be), and well would it be if he could get him quietly there; but the contrary is of too frequent occurrence. Either with some money the convict has secreted, or from the bounty of some old acquaintance, the assigned servant, now relieved for the first time for months from personal restraint, eludes the vigilance of his new master, finds his way into a public-house, drunkenness follows, disorderly conduct is the consequence; and the first notice the settler has of his servant, for whom he has travelled to Hobart, for whose clothing he has paid the Government, and for whose comfort he has made perhaps some other little advances, is, that he is lodged in the watch-house, with the loss of half his clothing, or committed to the gaol for a felony! This