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James Fenton

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A History of Tasmania

James Fenton (1820–1901) was born in Ireland and emigrated to Tasmania (then known as Van Diemen's Land) with his family in 1833. He became a pioneer settler in an area on the Forth River and published this history of the island in 1884. The book begins with the discovery of the island in 1642 and concludes with the deaths of some significant public figures in the colony in 1884. The establishment of the colony on the island, and the involvement of convicts in its building, is documented. A chapter on the native aborigines gives a fascinating insight into the attitudes of the colonising people, and a detailed account of the removal of the native Tasmanians to Flinders Island, in an effort to separate them from the colonists. The book also contains portraits of some aboriginal people, as well as a glossary of their language.

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A
HISTORY
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TASMANIA

FROM
ITS DISCOVERY IN 1642 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY
JAMES FENTON.

WITH MAP OF THE ISLAND AND PORTRAITS OF ABORIGINES
IN CHROMO-LITHOGRAPHY.

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PREFACE.

TASMANIA having of late years taken a more prominent place as a British Colony, it appeared to the writer desirable to collect and publish such records of her rise and progress as might prove interesting or valuable to her people, and especially to those who would serve their country in the sphere of politics.

Thirty years have elapsed since Mr. West's valuable book was published. At that time the young Colony was bowed down under the burden of a penal system, which made it a land of sorrow, and threatened to shatter the social fabric which the early colonists had attempted to rear. The events which have subsequently occurred—the wonderful results which followed the discovery of gold in Australia; the abolition of Transportation; the establishment of a liberal form of Representative Government; and the more recent Mineral discoveries—all of which have contributed so largely to the present prosperity of Tasmania—are for the first time recorded in a connected form in this volume.

For much of the information concerning the earlier days of colonisation in Tasmania, the writer has to acknowledge his indebtedness to the late Mr. West's History, and to the books of Mr. James Bonwick; from these he has freely quoted. Many other authorities relating to the earlier

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history have been consulted, and details of more recent events have been derived from files of the Hobart *Mercury* and *Launceston Examiner* newspapers, supplemented by the writer's own observation and recollections, extending over a period of fifty years.

Many kind friends and old colonists have supplied interesting facts; and heads of Government departments have been prompt and courteous in giving information from official records, whenever it was required.

Mr. A. Johnston, of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, merits special thanks for the obligations he has conferred in giving access to books of reference. And last, but not least, the writer has to acknowledge the valuable assistance he has received from Mr. James Backhouse Walker, of Hobart, who has laboured most assiduously at the task of revising the manuscript for the press, and has contributed the list of books relating to Tasmania, and the notes on Bruny and Risdon, which appear in the Appendix.

J. F

Brisbane Street, Launceston,

May, 1884.

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NOTE.—The portraits of Tasmanian aborigines were taken from life by the late Mr. Bock, for Lady Franklin, who permitted the artist to make copies for Henry Dowling, Esq., in 1838. The Tasmanian Government, in whose possession the portraits now are, has kindly allowed selections to be engraved for this volume. Mr. Dowling says:—"From my personal acquaintance with the subjects themselves, during the years 1831-33, I can confidently speak to the faithfulness of the portraiture."

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