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978-1-108-04975-7 - Narrative of Some Passages in the History of Van Diemen's Land: During the Last Three Years of Sir John Franklin's Administration of its Government

John Franklin

Frontmatter

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### Narrative of Some Passages in the History of Van Diemen's Land

The famous explorer of the Arctic region, Sir John Franklin (1786–1847) was appointed Governor of the penal colony of Tasmania (then known as Van Diemen's Land) in 1837. At first enthusiastically welcomed by the free colonists of the island, Franklin quickly became embroiled in political and administrative difficulties, and his compassion for convicts and aboriginals alike was incompatible with his duties. In 1843, colonial officials loyal to his predecessor succeeded in getting Franklin recalled by sending damaging accounts of his conduct to London. This pamphlet was Franklin's defence of his own character against these misrepresentations, but he was not to see his reputation recovered. He completed the book on 15 May 1845, just days before he departed on another Arctic expedition to search for the North-West Passage. Franklin and his entire crew died on the journey, and only many years later was the tragic fate of the expedition discovered.

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108049757](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108049757)

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2012

This edition first published 1845

This digitally printed version 2012

ISBN 978-1-108-04975-7 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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# NARRATIVE

OF

SOME PASSAGES IN THE HISTORY

OF

# VAN DIEMEN'S LAND,

DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS OF

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN'S ADMINISTRATION OF ITS GOVERNMENT.

*NOT PUBLISHED.*

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PRINTED BY RICHARD AND JOHN E. TAYLOR,  
RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following pages have been written chiefly for my friends in Van Diemen's Land, in order not to leave them in ignorance of the steps which I have taken to vindicate the honour of my late office, and my character as their Governor, from ex-parte representations on points on which, so long as I exercised the functions of government, I was precluded from offering any explanations.

Misrepresentations therefore long remained to a great degree uncontradicted by myself and unrefuted by my friends, not from want of good will on their part, but from want of a sufficient knowledge of all the facts.

The especial reference I have made to Van Diemen's Land will account for much minuteness and many circumstantial details which may seem somewhat tedious and obscure to those of my readers less informed and less interested in local matters than my Tasmanian friends. But there is not a single observation, however trivial, which is not intended to meet some special point on which studious misrepresentation has either been made or may be anticipated.

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I have ventured on no statements which I cannot prove, though I have refrained in many instances from bringing the proof forward, either from consideration to individuals whose interests might be compromised, or from the regard which I consider due to the confidence of social intercourse.

A few words may be necessary to account for the delay in the appearance of the pamphlet. When all hope of any satisfactory adjustment of my differences with the Colonial Office was at an end, and the only alternative left me was a resort to the present step, circumstances of too private a nature to enter into here, unavoidably prevented its commencement.

The work most reluctantly begun has occupied more time than I had anticipated. It was very far from being finished when the preparations for the Arctic expedition called off my thoughts and time to other duties more congenial to my habits, and still more imperative; and thus it has happened that, to my extreme vexation and regret, I find the day of my departure at hand without the satisfaction I had expected of seeing my pamphlet out of the press. This delay has however given me the advantage of receiving from Van Diemen's Land the documents contained in the Postscript. I have had this part of the work printed off, and have enclosed a copy to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

In executing a task which has been exceedingly painful to me and altogether foreign to my tastes and habits, I trust it will be found that I have studiously avoided the



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PREFACE.

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introduction of matter inculcating others, except where it could not be avoided without destroying the integrity of my narrative, or where it was required in justice to myself.

I have disclaimed throughout, and do again disclaim, the existence of any vindictive feelings either towards the individual, my differences with whom have laid the foundation of my present act of self-defence, or towards any others, and I close my work under circumstances which will give to this assurance a depth and a seriousness to which words so easily uttered may not always be strictly entitled.

With respect to the Minister whose name I have been compelled to bring forward so frequently in the following pages, I trust it will be found that I have not been altogether unmindful of my late official subordination to him, nor of the respect which I consider due from a commissioned officer of Her Majesty's service to a member of the ministry under which he has the honour to serve.

JOHN FRANKLIN.

40 Lower Brook Street,  
15th May, 1845.

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