

among its members many of the most abandoned wretches, and I am also aware that the Governor and Council are making every exertion to put a stop to the immorality and vice which so generally prevail; yet I am satisfied that the convicts who are assigned are, in some cases, goaded on to crime by the treatment they receive from their masters, who hold them as slaves, and degrade them to the level of the beast with whom they are forced to labour.

Although Great Britain has a right to assume a proud pre-eminence in her exertions to emancipate the blacks, yet it behooves her to look to her penal settlements, and examine into the tyranny and degradation that a large number of her subjects are suffering there, many of them for slight crimes.

Few except those who have visited this colony can be aware of the extent to which the lash is administered, and oftentimes on the mere pretence of unruly and bad behaviour to their masters, or for the most trivial offences. So many facts of this sort were stated to me by persons in office, and of the highest respectability, that there cannot be a doubt of their correctness. The following extract from a report of the Committee of Transportation in 1835 will show it in its true light.

“In 1835, the number of convicts in the colony of New South Wales was above twenty-eight thousand, and the summary convictions in that year were estimated at twenty-two thousand. In one month in 1833, two hundred and forty-seven convicts were flogged, and nine thousand seven hundred and eighty-four lashes inflicted, which would make for the whole year two thousand nine hundred and sixty-four floggings, and about one hundred and eight thousand lashes. This amount does not embrace one-third of the convicts convicted summarily, but only those sentenced to be flogged, and there yet remain those to be added who were sentenced to other degrees of punishment: male convicts to the iron-gangs and treadmill, and females to the solitary cells of the factory.”

The inquiries that I made in relation to the native-born inhabitants, were universally answered by all in favour both of their morals and habits. Judge Burton bears testimony that the free immigrants and native colonists are as exempt from the commission of crime as the inhabitants of any other country.

The defect in the female assignments is equally obvious. They are assigned only to married settlers who are considered respectable. They are accompanied by their children from the mother country, but immediately upon arriving the assignment takes place, and as the party to whom the convict is assigned does not wish to be encumbered with her offspring, they are at once separated. The child is not unfrequently