

act for a free passage. A penal colony should be simply a country in which the discharged felon could earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, just as our humbler people do at home, and in which the circumstances of the community would be such as to render the life of the marauder not only a more dangerous, but also a more toilsome and difficult one than that of the honest worker who laboured fairly for his bread. And a colony of this character ought not to be difficult to find. The country once heard a great deal about the Falkland Islands. Rather more than eighty years ago (1771), it was on the eve of entering, mainly on their account, into a war with France; and on that occasion Johnson wrote his famous tract to dissuade Britain from the contest, by showing that the islands were of really little value, and would be dearly purchased at such a price. But now that all dispute regarding them has ceased,—for, for the last quarter of a century they have been in the uninterrupted possession of this country,—they might be found very valuable as a penal colony. They have an area of about thirteen thousand square miles; their mean temperature during the year is exactly that of Edinburgh, with summers, however, a little warmer, and winters a little colder, than our Scotch ones; their surface is green; the grass-lands are peculiarly luxuriant, and form such a paradise for cattle, that the tame breeds are becoming wild in the interior, and promise to be very numerous; and the bays and sounds which indent the coasts abound in fish. Further, so imperfectly are they colonized, that though the expense of maintaining them costs the country about six thousand pounds per annum, their entire exports fall short of four thousand. In fine, at a very slight sacrifice, these islands could be converted into a hopeful penal colony, that would fully absorb the more dangerous criminals of the country for a quarter of a century to come.

But while recognising the lack of penal colonies, and the