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The Darien Disaster

By John Prebble

Vintage Publishing. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, The Darien Disaster, John Prebble, The word Darien is a scar on the memory of the Scots, and the hurt is still felt even where the cause of the wound is dimly understood. Three hundred years ago the Parliament of Scotland, in one of its last acts before the nation lost its political identity, defied the King and the persistent hostility of the English to establish a noble trading company, to settle a colony, and to recover its people from a century of despair, privation, famine and decay. The site of the colony, Darien on the Isthmus of Panama, was the enduring dream of William Paterson, the erratically brilliant Scot who had helped to found the Bank of England. He called it 'the door of the seas, and the key of the universe', and believed that it would become a bridge between East and West, an entrepot through which would pass the richest trade in the world. The first attempt to make the Company a joint Scots and English venture was crushed by the English Parliament. The Scots created it by themselves, in a wave of almost hysterical enthusiasm, subscribing half of...



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Meanwhile, the Darien disaster seems to have persuaded hard-headed Scotsmen that their country could not prosper by itself, but needed access to England's empire, and it helped to pave the way for the Act of Union between the two countries in 1707. Under the Act the investors in the Darien scheme were quietly compensated for their losses at taxpayers' expense. Caribbean. POPULAR ARTICLES. By framing the Darien scheme as a disaster story, the multiplicity of decisions and events are simplified into a linear narrative. The simplified tale serves two main purposes. One is as a footnote in another historical narrative, say that of the Union or Scotland itself. The other is the provision of a classic tale of disaster which might act as a warning against folly or ambition. In this. 2 This paper was written with the support of the Economic and Social Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship. From the maps, Darien, near what is now the border between Panama and Colombia, looked to be the best spot to start a settlement. It was on the narrowest part of the isthmus so that meant less work building a path to the Pacific. But, none of the colony's planners, including Paterson, had ever been there. The Scottish climate is cool, wet, and changeable. In Darien, it is swelteringly hot all year round, with some places getting well over 100 inches of rain a year. Scotland has clouds of irritating midges; tiny biting insects.