FOREWORD

I welcome this readable and well-documented piece of work by Dr. Niranjan Dhar. It is chiefly based upon contemporary manuscript records and contemporary (British) Parliamentary Papers. It embodies the results of the author's prolonged and painstaking researches into an important period of Indian constitutional history. It presents, in a compact form, a large mass of useful information generally interpreted with ability, judgment and impartiality. In a sense, this work is a continuation of two works of mine, published many years ago, entitled Early Land Revenue System in Bengal and Bihar, 1765-1772, and Early Administrative System of the East India Company in Bengal, 1765-1774. As a matter of fact, the author undertook to carry on his researches into the period of Indian constitutional history with which his work deals, on my suggestion and under my guidance. On the whole, I consider this work to be a valuable contribution to the constitutional history of India during the period on which it dwells.

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PREFACE

The British conquest of India was manifold. That is why we find that the British rule in India is over, but not the British legacy. On the ruins of the Mughal administration the Britishers built up an administrative apparatus which was altogether different from all the preceding administrations both in form and spirit. Incidentally it has also come to be adjudged as one of the most excellent administrations of the world. In the post-independence period we have inherited this apparatus from our former conquerors. The impact of British ideas was felt in the sphere of administration before any other sphere.

The British administration in India was not, however, built in a day. It did not consist in the continued growth of national institutions. Nor did it develop in pursuance of a premeditated plan. The story of this administration is the story of a series of experiments made by foreign rulers in a strange land. These experiments were carried out under various stresses and strains and exhibited a considerable vacillation of purpose too. But still on the whole we find a steady advance towards the forging out of machineries for “securing justice and legislation”. The story of these experiments has been told here vividly and as an integral part of a historical scene so that the present can be understood properly in the light of the past.

The task of evolving an administrative machinery devolved upon the East India Company at the outset. Generally new experiments were first tried in Bengal, the premier Presidency of the Company during the latter half of the 18th century, and subsequently the other Presidencies became the beneficiaries
of the results obtained there. The period under review, however, opened with the tacit assumption that the Company, mainly because of its commercial character, had so far failed to provide a fair and adequate administration for the people over whom they happened to rule. The first major Parliamentary interference in the Company's affairs in the shape of the Regulating Act rested on this admitted failure. England was then on the threshold of the capitalist development. Industrial capital was getting an increasing hold over the Parliament. With a view to insulating the home market against the inroads of foreign manufactures industrial capitalists started launching attacks against merchant capital concentrated in the East India Company. As England was at that time on the way to be the greatest power of the world, a note of optimism further coloured the intellectual life of her people. She was going to export not only her goods but also her ideas and institutions.

The period under review, though only of twelve years, constitutes, as a perusal of this thesis will testify, an important and interesting chapter in the constitutional history of India. The importance of this period requires a more intensive study of it than has hitherto been done and also a study from new directions. And exactly it is what we propose to do in this thesis with a special eye upon the subject as to how far the merchant-company, under the impact of the first major Parliamentary interference, could outgrow its commercial character and provide for the people of this country a system of administration which was both workable and English in character.

For the sake of the convenience of our study we have, however, split our subject into two parts—political and judicial, each part being self-sufficient by itself. The political part deals with the Company's own machinery of administration.
And in the judicial part we have endeavoured to see how far the Company's machinery had been able to provide adequate security and justice to the people, which is the acid test of any good government. As a matter of fact, the political part could have its justification only in the context of its achievements in the judicial sphere. The present volume is concerned with the political part of the Company's administrative system, the judicial part being kept reserved for treatment in the second volume. For the treatment of these two parts in two separate volumes I have to make some minor adjustments in my original thesis which has been approved for the D. Phil. Degree of the University of Calcutta.

Before I conclude, I must place on record my sincere gratitude to Prof. D. N. Banerjee, (now retired) Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, under whose able guidance I worked upon this thesis. I am also grateful to Dr. C. H. Philips of the University of London for some valuable suggestions offered by him for the improvement of this work.

My sincere thanks are also due to the Director of National Archives, the Keeper of Records of the Government of West Bengal, the Librarian of the National Library and the Librarian of the Calcutta University Library and to the members of their staff for the various facilities they kindly extended to me in the collection of data for my thesis. In this connection I should also express my sense of obligation to Sri Rashbehari Saha of the Senior Basic Training College, Banipur, for placing at my disposal the library of the College which has an excellent collection of some rare books. Further, I must express my gratitude to my esteemed friend, Sri Sushil Mukherjea, for his taking keen interest in bringing out the book and seeing it through the press. I am also thankful to
the management of the Publicity Printers for the full co-operation I received from it in printing the book. My young colleague, Sri Asish Kumar Sen, has prepared the index of this book for which I must express my sincere thanks to him. Sri Jagadish Banerjee has designed the cover of the book, for which I am under a sense of great obligation to him.

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