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ENGLISH INSTITUTIONS

General Editor :
LORD STAMP

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E. T. CRUTCHLEY
C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E.

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

A series of new books on English Institutions may seem, on the one hand, to run a grave risk of duplicating or overlapping many existing volumes, or of dealing only with the trivial on the other. The development of the more important and prominent has had many chroniclers, for in the nature of things and by their fitness for their essential functions, they must have a great deal in common with similar Institutions abroad and little that is distinctive for treatment in a national sense. The unique ones would be those that serve less universal purposes and that, therefore, find themselves in a secondary rank. The opening volume of this series, however, dispels these misconceptions and belies these prejudgments. Nothing could be more universal than the functions of a State Post Office; nothing could be more distinctive than the British leadership in this development or than the present position held by this national Institution. Mr Crutchley has written a book which is entirely original and, within my knowledge, duplicates no other; even familiar matter has been presented in a new setting, and the whole treatment is sound and functional in its historical leads, and impressively informative in its description of the Institution as it is to-day.

Man's life in modern society, however individualistic, increasingly expresses itself through Institutions, and his life in any land can only be described and understood by his participation in them and his loyalty to them. The conventional description of the activities of a particular individual dips into Institutions widely, here and there,

touching all the types and uses of groups, from point to point, in turn. It is a useful complementary method to describe and to account for each of the Institutions in itself and as a whole, as impersonally and generally as possible, subordinating the personal view or the isolated service. In this way a composite picture of society may be constructed which describes not so much how an Englishman lives, as the *means* by which he lives and expresses himself.

It is confidently anticipated that this series will provide new emphasis, and explain many neglected but important phases in our national life. Even the most deeply rooted and long established of our Institutions has to make new alignments of its purposes, and modifications of its methods, to meet the totally different mental attitude of this generation and to accommodate the “pace of change”, if it is to serve the present age and also to survive. This then, after a severe period of adjustment, is a peculiarly suitable time at which to take stock of the present situation and aims, and their true place in our corporate and personal life. Mr Crutchley has a great story to tell and he has told it worthily, with inside knowledge and a departmental pride, in leash, which is the surest warrant of attractive presentation.

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Dedicated to
SIR THOMAS ROBERT GARDINER
K.C.B., K.B.E.
Director General of the Post Office

PREFACE

Returning to the service of the Post Office in 1935 after an absence of twenty-one years, I was struck at once by two facts. The first was the dramatic development which had taken place in all departments since the pre-war days, and especially the immense acceleration of that development which is a feature of the present decade. I have attempted to indicate this rapid progress in the impression—it is no more than an impression—of the various services contained in this book.

The second fact that struck me was the intense pride in the service shown by all who had a hand in its administration and operation. In this there was nothing new. Post Office people have always been intensely proud of their own special bit of the great machine, and quietly appreciative of the other bits, and of the machine as a whole.

But I mention the matter here because I have traded upon it quite shamelessly in compiling these pages.

For the help I have thus received from numerous colleagues in many departments and grades of the service I offer my sincere thanks. I also acknowledge my debt to the several authors of books and pamphlets on the Post Office and its various services which I have drawn upon for information, and here I should be at fault if I omitted special mention of the work on the Post Office written some twelve years ago by Sir Evelyn Murray, K.C.B., the last to hold the post of “Secretary”.

It is customary to talk of the “new” Post Office which is supposed to have come into being as a result of agitations and inquests culminating in the year 1932. Changes there undoubtedly were at that time, changes in administration and changes in practice, but it must always be remembered that the strides which the Post Office has made in recent years have been possible only because of the firm track laid by Sir Evelyn Murray and his colleagues, often in very discouraging circumstances, in years gone by.

E. T. C.

October 1938