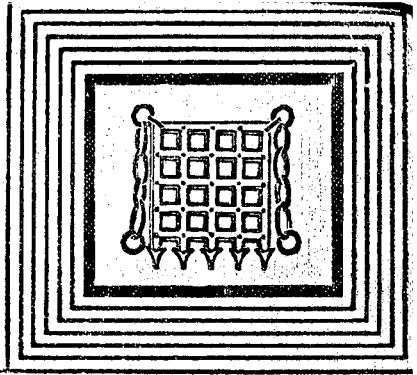


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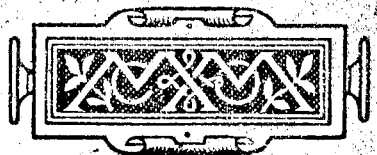
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CENTRAL
GOVERNMENT

BY

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LATE FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

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PREFACE.

IN order to explain the scheme and general character of this volume, it is necessary to say a few words about the series of which it forms the commencement. The *English Citizen Series* is intended to meet the demand for accessible information on the ordinary conditions and the current terms of our political life. In this, its first volume, it deals with the machinery whereby our Constitution works, and the broad lines upon which it has been constructed: in subsequent volumes it will treat of the course of legislation; of the electoral body, its functions, composition, and development; of the great scheme of national income, and its disbursement, and of various other matters; but on the present, as on every other subject, the aim has been not to give mere *compendia* of technical information, but to sum up as shortly and clearly as possible the leading points, and to arrange these so as to show their relation to one another, and their general bearing on the life and the duties of the citizen.

To apply these principles to the treatment of a subject of such dimensions as that of "Central Govern-

ment" has not been easy. The task encounters embarrassments on two sides. The limits prescribed to the work forbade its expansion into a historical treatise on the development of our political institutions; the object proposed to the work forbade its contraction into a mere catalogue of administrative details. To maintain, on the one hand, its *explanatory* character, it was necessary to be continually referring to phases of constitutional history, and sometimes to points of constitutional law; while, on the other hand, to avoid the danger of discursiveness, it has been found equally necessary to treat these matters with an almost stenographic brevity. The necessity of conforming to these two conditions will explain and justify the limitations of the volume, both in the region of principle and in that of detail. It cannot pretend to compete with more copious and systematic treatises on the English Constitution; nor does it profess to enter with the exhaustiveness of an official handbook into the minutiae of departmental administration. The writer's object has been to confine it as closely as possible to the points of contact between constitutional principle and administrative detail, and to give rather the political *rationale* of the various processes of government than to follow out their departmental history to its ultimate facts. It is with constant reference to this object that the present volume should be consulted; and it may thus, it is hoped, be consulted with advantage.

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