Preface to the
Carleton Library Edition

Professor Chester W. New’s Lord Durham: A biography of John George Lambton, first Earl of Durham was published in 1929, and although long out-of-print and in heavy demand for many years, it has never been re-issued. No substitute has been available for the major figure and phase of Canadian history with which it deals. Immediately upon its appearance, New’s biography superseded the only earlier account of Lord Durham’s life, that of Stuart J. Reid, published in 1907. Nor has any work published since 1929 challenged New’s definitive interpretation of Durham’s career.

Professor New was a most industrious and persistent researcher, and the fact that his work was based throughout upon extensive and intensive study of the primary sources, especially personal papers, parliamentary reports, and newspapers, in all the principal private and public repositories of Britain and Canada, will be evident to every reader. It will also be noted that Professor New had a conception of the biographer’s task that was some distance removed from that of Lytton Strachey. “My business,” he wrote in his 1929 preface, “has been primarily to describe and interpret, and not to praise or blame. I have conceived of the task of the biographer as simply to set the stage and permit the central figure, his colleagues, friends, and opponents, to speak and act for themselves.” It has been the judgement of British and Canadian historians that Professor New admirably fulfilled his conception of the biographer’s rôle.

Lord Durham’s Mission to Canada comprises chapters 16-23 of the original biography. In addition to the earlier chapters on Durham’s career in England, a final one, “The Last Months,” has also been omitted. Professor New’s original preface has been left out, together with an appendix exploring the author-ship of the Durham Report. The chapters reprinted here are the part that centre upon Durham’s mission to Canada and his famous Report — that section of the book most necessary to students of Canadian history.