Although several works have been done on the political and military transactions of the early British rule in Assam, the number of similar works in the economic field is extremely meagre. In fact, no attempt has been made so far to analyse the problem of labour particularly in connection with the tea industry which is of unique importance to this province. The object of the present work is to discuss the problem of labour in Assam in its various aspects from 1826 to 1901 —- from the commencement of the East India Company's rule to the passing of the Act VI of 1901, when major issues received at least a partial solution. For a clear appreciation of the narrative, the introduction gives the physical, political and economic background of the subject. The emergence of the problem and the endeavours made by the public and private agencies from time to time to recruit skilled and unskilled labourers are narrated in chapters I and II. The importation of outside labour in larger numbers created problems of transportation and rehabilitation under trying conditions and these are discussed exhaustively in chapters III and IV. The problem of wages formed the subject matter of chapter V. How far the plantation legislation in Assam was the result of antagonism,
compromise and amity between labour and capital in Assam
and how far was it a product of the Bengal Renaissance —
these are analysed in chapter VI.

The work is based mainly on official sources
preserved in the Record Department of the Government
of Assam and in the Archives of the Government of
West Bengal most of which were previously unused;
the details of these are appended in the bibliography.
Besides official reports, Gazetteers, Codes, the
contemporary press reports have been consulted and
utilized. It has been my sincere endeavour to assess
everything objectively and conclusions are arrived at
as honestly and impartially as possible.

I have to acknowledge my grateful obliga-
tion to my professor and guide Dr. H. K. Barpajari
for his help and guidance. But for his criticisms
and suggestions I would have fallen into too many
errors. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my learned
examiners for kindly giving me a chance to resubmit
the thesis after necessary revisions. In compliance
with their invaluable suggestions, apart from a
thorough scrutiny of the language and expressions, a
brief brief political and cultural history of Assam,
the flora and fauna of the province and an epilogue summarising
the facts stated in the thesis have been incorporated in the present volume.

Gauhati,
December 16, 1968.

(SIBOPADA DE)