

information thus acquired I have preserved in a separate form, as it is unsuitable for this report, but of the most essential consequence in conducting the office work relating to the Archives. Specimens of the result of the calendaring may be seen in the volumes of Abstracts of State papers relating to the Colonies deposited among the Archives. With respect to other calendars, I ask your permission to make some remarks, the value of the documents referred to being comparatively little understood here.

The publication of the rolls of the Exchequer, or rolls of the Pipe (*Magnum Rotulum Scacarii vel Magnum Rotulum Pipæ*) shows the great value attached to even such apparently dry and sapless material as the accounts of the Court of Exchequer. The rolls of 31 Henry I, edited by the Rev. Joseph Hunter, F.S.A., afford an evidence of the diligence used in identifying and the use made of such documents; the importance of this, in a historical point of view, being best shown in the editor's words: "These rolls * * * contain accompts of the King's revenue year by year as they were made up, with the King's officers appointed to that service, by the sheriffs of counties who acted as the King's bailiffs and by other ministers and debtors of the Crown, and since payments by the King were also often made through the hands of the sheriffs and other ministers in the different counties, we obtain through these accompts a view of no inconsiderable portion of the royal expenditure in a long tract of time, by which a clear and valuable light is thrown on many subjects, and sometimes on the most important public transactions of the realm." (Preface, page i.)

The identifying the date of this special roll engaged the attention of some of the most learned antiquaries, as it stood alone, none preceding it, and the next following it after a long interval. It is the only evidence of transactions to which these rolls refer of so early a date as 1131.

In the introduction to the rolls and records of the King's Justiciars or Justices (*Rotuli Curie Regis*) Sir Francis Palgrave, a former Deputy Keeper of Records, gives a most interesting series of historical sketches, all drawn from the seemingly bald pleas on the rolls of the Justices. I make one quotation: "In the history of the English constitution, our legal records are amongst the most important elements. The law restrained the Sovereign before he was controlled by his Great Council. And the most important functions antiently exercised by the High Court of Parliament, arose from the dispensation of justice exercised in ordinary cases by the Judges to whom the King delegated his authority and power.

"But the interest of these legal records is not local, or peculiarly appertaining unto this our country. They are the property not merely of England, but of the English people, wheresoever settled or dispersed. We have here the germ and foundation of the laws obtaining in those States, which, rising beyond the ocean, seem appointed to preserve the language and institutions of England beneath other skies, when the empire of the parent Commonwealth shall have passed away like a dream." (Introduction Vol. I., page 3.)

I have referred to these volumes as illustrations of the use made of the records; the work of editing and printing is going on yearly, for which, as will be seen by the table of expenditure given above, the sum of £2,000 sterling is annually voted.

HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION.

Hitherto, as may be seen, the only papers dealt with are those of a public character—Court records or State papers. But in 1869, it was resolved to extend inquiries in other directions for documents bearing on the history of the country in all its relations. The title "Records," already extended since the passing of the Act of 1838, was still further widened in its meaning. The Commission issued in 1869 to constitute the *Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, authorizing them to search (with the consent of the possessors) for papers in private repositories, will show this clearly. After naming the members, at the head of whom was Lord Romilly, Master or Keeper of the Rolls and Records, the Commission proceeds: "It has been represented unto us that there are belonging to many institutions and private families various