

INTRODUCTION.

Probably the most outstanding feature in the rapid growth of the Public Archives of Canada in the past decade has been the acquisition of many *fonds d'archives*, private collections, and transcripts. One result of these accessions from public departments and other sources was to render inadequate the means formerly employed for making known to the general public the nature of such material. At the same time another difficulty steadily grew worse. The available supply of the early *Archives Reports*, some of which contain useful calendars, has become exhausted. Furthermore, to locate the documents relating to the average subject, even with the aid of a complete set, usually means a tedious search, for with a few exceptions the *Reports* are not indexed.* Consequently, it was decided to issue in a convenient form a work which would deal in a broad way with material already calendared as well as with recent acquisitions. The present volume forms the first half of this plan, and includes nearly all the series which are in proper form to be inventoried.

At the outset it is desirable to state some patent limitations of this book. In the first place it makes no attempt to supersede existing calendars, but aims to list the chief subjects and to render them more available through an index. Secondly, only the main topics of each volume or section are noted: subjects of minor importance, or which are concerned with details cannot come within the scope of this manual. In many cases only the name of the topic could be given. To proceed further would require too much space, and often involve disputed questions, with which it is the task of the historian rather than the archivist to deal. Finally, problems of classification and arrangement are touched upon only when it becomes necessary to mention changes made in old series. Such matters are of course highly important, but it is not intended in this volume to encroach upon the sphere of an archives manual.

For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the *Archives Reports*, it may be well to state that manuscripts in the Public Archives fall under three heads: (1) old records transferred from various government departments; (2) transcripts made in Europe and America; and (3) collections or single items acquired by gift or purchase.

The first volume includes the various series of both French and English régime which are usually termed "state papers," and a few collections closely affiliated with them.

Since a large amount of reclassification and sorting must intervene before the material for another volume will be ready for definite description, two years at least will be required before the second part of this *Guide* may be expected. This being the case, a few notes on the more important collections not included in this volume may prove useful.

Papers from the Privy Council. Minutes of the Executive Councils of Upper and Lower Canada, from 1764 to 1867, and accompanying papers, miscellaneous volumes and loose documents. With a possible exception in favour of series G, this is the most important original collection at the Archives.

Papers from the Department of the Secretary of State. From 1760 to 1840 there are papers of several offices dealing with local administration, chief among them being those of the civil secretaries of the governors and lieutenant-governors, and the provincial secretaries of both provinces.

*None previous to the year 1904 are indexed, and only a few after that date.