

APPENDIX No. 1.

REPORT ON PUBLIC ARCHIVES.

(DOUGLAS BRYMNER, ARCHIVIST.)

SIR,—I have the honour to present the Annual Report on the state of the Archives under my charge, and the progress that has been made in the collection of the papers bearing on the history of the Provinces of British North America, now forming the Dominion of Canada.

The experience gained during the nine years that have elapsed since the formation of this branch of the Department, and the recent investigation which I was instructed to make in Europe, induce me to ask permission to enter more fully than has hitherto been done into the consideration of the questions relating to the collection, arrangement and safe-keeping of the records of the Dominion. Such a consideration must necessarily be of some length, but I shall endeavour to condense the information into as brief space as is consistent with perfect clearness.

The history of the Dominion of Canada, as an organized confederation, only dates from the 1st July, 1867, when the foundation was laid for the consolidation under one government of all British North America. It is, therefore, evident, that so far as regards the Dominion, its record as a Dominion can only relate to its current history since the 1st of July, 1867. It is equally evident, that to understand the political position of the Dominion, the history of the various Provinces and Territories of which it is composed, and the progress of events which has led to the present constitution of Canada, the records of the past must be made accessible to the historian, and placed in as complete a state as possible at his disposal.

There are, then, two branches of the subject to which attention may be directed : 1. The past history of the Provinces of British North America, now forming the Dominion of Canada ; and 2, its current records since the 1st July, 1867.

The tenour of the instructions I had the honour to receive for my guidance on leaving for Europe, directed me to ascertain, as fully as possible, the nature, number, and, generally speaking, the historical character of manuscript to be found in the public repositories, and next, to investigate, so far as the time at my disposal would permit, the means taken to collect, arrange, preserve, and render accessible to the public the records therein contained. In the Act creating the Public Record Office in London (1 and 2 Vic., Cap. 94), to which I shall afterwards refer, the word "Records" is defined to mean : "All rolls, records, writs, books, proceedings, decrees, wills, warrants, accounts, papers and documents whatsoever of a public nature belonging to Her Majesty, or then deposited in any of the offices or places of custody before mentioned." This definition was, however, very widely extended, as I shall show hereafter.

As a matter of convenience, I shall take the second branch of the inquiry first, by tracing the steps which have led to the formation of one great Public Record Office. It will be seen how closely the facts bear on the preservation of our current records, and how great an opportunity exists at this early stage of our history to profit by the mistakes of older nations. The second branch will naturally come under consideration, in discussing the first, without any formal division.

In giving the result of my investigations, it will, I think, be better to throw the whole into a condensed statement, rather than to occupy space by constant reference to the particular public office from which I obtained the information.