

# THE CIVILIAN

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## THE DOMINION ARCHIVES.

**The Branch of the Public Service that Keeps the Records of Canada's Life and Growth.**

*(2nd Instalment.)*

### **The Acquisition of Archives.**

The administration of the Archives may be considered under the acquisition and utilization of records. The acquisition of Archives depends on conditions peculiar to each particular state. For Canada there are three chief sources from which public documents may be obtained—the public departments of France, of Great Britain, and the federal departments of Canada. The complicated character of the organization of the system of colonial governments of France has resulted in the division of the colonial records among several of the departments. This has increased the difficulties of locating the records relating to Canada. While the British public offices may not contain the abundance of material found in France, their records are in such form as to make them more readily accessible. The transcribing of records is of necessity a slow and tedious process. The limited space available for copyists and the restrictions regarding office hours have not relieved the situation. It would seem that it is in the photographic process that assistance must be sought. At present, the chief objections to the use of photography for transcription arise from the dangers involved in the use of chemicals for the process of developing and from the absence of a photographic

paper which is suitable for a permanent record. In spite of these imperfections, it is proposed to employ photography to facilitate the work of transcription. Photographic copies can be made of the records in Paris and in London and from these copies, transcripts can be made in the offices of the Archives at Ottawa. A larger and a more competent staff can be employed than would be possible in Europe and the work can be done under more favourable conditions than at present.

The acquisition of public records from the various departments of the federal government is at present regulated by an Order in Council of 1903 which directed that documents in the public departments, prior to 1867, and which were not required for the current business of the office should be transferred to the custody of the Archivist. In many cases the Canadian departments are very jealous of their records but the public interest demands that the public records should be preserved in a place where their safety is guaranteed.

From the standpoint of historical value the private and semi-official correspondence of the men who have been active in the public life of the country is of greater importance than the official records. An attempt is being made to secure the correspondence of the various Canadian