

and in Montreal there are collections of papers which should be transcribed. For one hundred and fifty years our history is French, and it is only reasonable that English and French students should seek the fullest information in the Dominion archives concerning this period. The seventeenth century is, indeed, the spring time of our history. It concerns an age when old world customs and institutions were transplanted to these shores; and since the proportion of our records concerning the English domination is so overwhelmingly large, I trust that special consideration may be given to my suggestions. By a systematic effort, and a liberal expenditure for one year, valuable additions might be made to our French Records. In the collection, preservation, and classification of archives we are achieving something beyond meeting the demands of historical inquirers. These records are of benefit to the whole community. In the administration of Justice; in the determination of civil rights; plans and papers from our archives are frequently indispensable.

In a country of such vast proportions as Canada, it is not possible to render the accumulations of the Archives Department accessible to all those who are, or who might be interested in them. It is desirable, therefore, to bring some of the representative documents bearing on the more important periods and problems of our history, within the reach of the rapidly increasing number of both Canadians and others who are manifesting an interest in our history and institutions.

The first volume prepared for this purpose contains documents relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, from the Cession to the Constitutional Act of 1791.

The documents though arranged as nearly as possible in chronological order, may be classified under three groups.

I. Purely formal or legal documents, such as terms of capitulation, treaties, proclamations, ordinances, and Imperial statutes, establishing or amending the constitution of the country.

II. Documents expressing the wishes and aspirations of the inhabitants of the country as to their future government; as also those discussing, shaping or setting forth the policy of Britain with reference to the government of Canada. These include petitions from the various classes and interests among the inhabitants of the country, reports from Governors, and declarations of policy on the part of the Home Government.

III. Special Reports of an official nature, setting forth the actual condition of the country in its various interests, as a basis of information for those shaping the colonial policy and framing constitutional measures for the government of Canada.

Several of the documents included are, of course, already in print, though not always in authentic form and some in such rare issues as to be found in only a few libraries. In all cases care has been taken to furnish accurate copies of the documents in their original form.

Certain parts of some of the treaties, reports, &c., have only an indirect bearing on constitutional questions; but it is considered advisable to give the documents in full, rather than to mar their completeness by presenting the essential portions only, in the form of extracts.

These original sources, it is hoped, will furnish the more essential materials, not only for determining the actual constitution under which Canada was governed, but for arriving at an independent judgment as to the various sources of interest and policy, which gave to that constitution the shape which it actually took, as well as for estimat-