

REPORT OF MR. EDOUARD RICHARD.

TO DOUGLAS BRYMNER, LL.D., F.R.S.C.,

Archivist,

Ottawa.

SIR,—I have the honour to present my report on the historical researches made by me,—in pursuance of the instructions of the Hon. Minister of Agriculture,—in Paris, at the Ministère des Colonies, from the month of March of last year (1897), up to the close of the year (1898).

Since M. Marmette, my predecessor in the task committed to me, suspended, in 1887, the work he had commenced in 1883, the colonial archives, which were then with the Archives of the Marine, have been removed to the Ministère des Colonies, now located in the Louvre. M. Guët, who was then in charge of these archives, has been replaced by M. Tautet, whose urbanity and readiness to oblige are everything that we could possibly desire. For several years now he has constituted himself, in some sort, the agent of our government, directing the work of our copyists, settling with them for their labour, and, in short, doing all he can to facilitate the accomplishment of the undertaking we have in hand. Deeply convinced of the historical importance of these archives, deploring the losses suffered from time to time, and dreading fresh disasters, he is most anxious to promote the work of transcription undertaken by our government, in order that these records, being duplicated in our hands, may be rendered secure against any and every eventuality.

They are now located in the attic story of the Louvre, and anything but safe from the danger of fire. There is, therefore, good ground for anxiety.*

Two or three centuries count for little in the life of a people as regards its development, and particularly those centuries that have witnessed its birth and its infancy. These archives which relate in minute detail the story of that infancy and the vicissitudes it underwent, are nevertheless destined to be of the very highest interest to the great people we are yet to be. Because we are still in that infancy—because these events are so near us—we do not perhaps fully realize all the interest they are calculated to awaken hereafter. The primitive history of Greece, of Egypt, of Rome, is very remote from us, but it does not follow that interest in that history is dying out in proportion to its remoteness. Quite the contrary, that primitive history is precisely what we are most anxious to impress upon our minds; and if our success is but partial—if mere legend has taken the place of true history—it is because wars, pillage and fire have deprived us of the means of accomplishing it.

The destruction of the Alexandrian library occurred many long years ago, but is the loss thereby incurred less keenly felt now than it was then? Certainly not! Thus

* Removal to other quarters is being considered.