

To the Honourable S. A. FISHER, M.P.,

Minister of Agriculture.

SIR,—During the past year the work of the Archives Branch has been conducted, as far as possible, on the lines marked out in my report for 1904. The principal task which we have undertaken for the advancement of historical science, is an investigation, or critical examination of the archives of the Dominion, with a view of publishing a book of reference, or general guide, for the service of future enquirers. It would seem that little argument is requisite to prove that the first thing to be done in order to render the information contained in the mass of our records available to the public, is to let the public know what records exist and where they are to be found. Although our investigation, for the purpose of a guide, is at present limited to Canada, I hope that it will be merely the introduction to a work embracing the archives of the United States and Europe, in so far as they relate to this country. From the indications given in such books of reference, selections might be printed under the title of Materials for the History of Canada. In the present volume a summary is printed of the archives found on the Island of Orleans. A similar report has been prepared for many other parishes, but as the information to be derived from the whole Dominion is to be systematically arranged and printed, it is not desirable to give further details here. In the Province of Quebec the examination has been conducted under direction of the Rev. P. M. O'Leary, D.S.O., sometime Professor of History in Quebec. To facilitate the object we have in view, His Grace the Archbishop of Quebec has issued a letter to the clergy of his diocese, inviting them to co-operate in the work of the Branch by giving free access to their papers. In the winter months, when travelling was difficult, the Rev. Mr. O'Leary devoted his time to an examination of the archives of the Bishop's Palace. There is, of course, much work to be accomplished before the whole of the Province can be visited, but the value of what has already been done may be ascertained from the summaries here published. The plan we have adopted appears to meet with the approval of scholars and the custodians of records, and private individuals have expressed a desire that their collections should be calendared for the public service.

Dr. James Hannay, F.R.S.C., the historian, has been engaged to investigate the Archives of the Maritime Provinces. He has already made several excellent reports on the papers he has examined, and he has also prepared a general report, which is here quoted,—

"Having been selected by the Minister of Agriculture to examine into and report on the Historical material in the Maritime Provinces, available for a History of Canada, I proceeded to Halifax in the first week of July, 1905. I selected Nova Scotia as the most proper field to begin my work because it is the mother colony of the Maritime Provinces, and also because its Archives have been better attended to than those of either New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island.

"The term Nova Scotia, is popularly held to be identical with the old French Province of Acadia and for ordinary purposes this definition is correct enough, but a reference to the original charters shows very great differences in their meaning and the words Acadia and Nova Scotia have both represented very different areas of territory in times past.