

Mr. Cruickshank's Address

The Progress of Historical Studies in Canada 1885-95

The several Centennial celebrations held in commemoration of the settlement of the loyalists, in 1884, gave an impulse to the study of local history which has been largely sustained by the publication of annual reports on the Canadian Archives prepared by Dr. Douglas Brymner. The establishment of the Archives office in 1872 under its present able chief has been the means of bringing together, classifying, and placing at the service of the student a collection of historical documents unrivalled on this continent both for extent and importance, and increasing rapidly from year to year. In 1884 Dr. Brymner began his calendar of the now celebrated Haldimand Collection comprising 232 volumes, which was completed in 1889, and has been followed by calendars of 30 volumes of Colonel Bouquet's papers, and 317 volumes of the Colonial Office Records prepared by the same indefatigable hand.

The extent and value of the work thus performed may be imperfectly judged from the fact that these calendars cover 3,857 printed pages in royal octavo, and that it involved the attentive perusal of 579 MS. volumes from which they were prepared. In addition to this, several series of documents of great value on the settlement of the loyalists, the Northwest trade, negotiations with Vermont, French republican designs on Canada and the political agitation of Justice Thorpe in 1806-7, have been printed entire for the first time.

American historical societies have made good use of the privileges so generously extended to all-comers at the Archives office in marked contrast to the narrow policy pursued by the United States Government in such matters, and have expended large sums in transcribing and printing documents. Among these the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society easily holds the first place, having published documents covering no less than 1,116 octavo pages in volumes 9, 10 and 11 of their collections, while volumes 15 and 16 of the same series, containing no less than 1,497 pages, are entirely made up of papers drawn from the same source. Indeed, it may be said that nearly everything of genuine historical interest published of late years by this Society has been obtained from the Canadian Archives.

The publication Committee justly remark that "the example of the Canadian Government in securing all that can be secured from these sources (England and France) relative to its own most interesting early history is not only worthy of all praise but also of imitation by all the border States, as well as by the United States.