

# THE CIVILIAN

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## The Library of Parliament.

(First Installment.)

The Parliamentary Library is known to every member of the civil service. There is not one of the five thousand government employees in Ottawa but could direct a stranger to the big dome-shaped building on the bluff overlooking the Ottawa river. Few, however, would be able to tell anything of its origin and its use to the Dominion as a whole.

The descriptive articles—dealing with the various departments—that have lately been appearing from time to time in *The Civilian* have been brief and to the point. No doubt their authors were wise, for a little bit often goes a long way, but should the writer undertake the allotted task of attempting to give *Civilian* readers some new ideas of this National Library, with the sole intent of being as brief as possible, he would be guilty of a great injustice. The subject is not one to be treated lightly. Having this opinion, the best way appears to lay in the division of what might be otherwise a long story.

The history of the Library is worth consideration. The Library itself deserves notice and its usefulness should be brought to light. It is intended in this, the first article, to deal entirely with how a quarter of a million books were gathered together.

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A Canadian Library can be traced back as far as the first parliamentary régime in Quebec, while there is proof of a small Library having existed in Upper Canada one hundred and three years ago. There were thus two collections in the Canadas.

During the time that has elapsed since 1815 and the present, the colony, stretching from the boisterous old Atlantic to the sun-kissed Pacific, has undergone a wonderful process of development. Then, Ontario was "The West," and Europe knew little of the country across the sea with great tracts of unexplored forests and prairies. Reading matter was scarce and expensive. It could only be collected through the generosity of a few broad-minded individuals who saw that the general public, like themselves, must have access to the thoughts of the great masters, if the new towns and settlements were to really progress.

To-day Canada stands before the world as the chief link in the great colonial chain, while the art of printing has made tremendous strides, and cheap editions of standard literature have been placed within easy reach of all.

The twin collections grew slowly but surely. There were many setbacks as a regular librarian was an unknown factor, and members and others treated valuable works with scant care. In fact, on more than one occasion, they neglected to return the books they had taken out.

When the Union came in 1841, the Libraries amalgamated. By unanimous consent a Dr. Winder was appointed senior librarian with Mr. Alpheus Todd as his assistant.

Parliament moved every five years, holding sittings at Quebec, Montreal, Kingston and Toronto. The difficulties these movements caused were enormous, as the parliamentary machinery was tossed hither and thither