

that the collection of correspondence at Halifax would be more useful at Ottawa than immured in the vaults in London, and by the end of the year 1873 fully eight tons of official documents were brought from Halifax and deposited in their original cases in the archive rooms.

"Those familiar with the subject know the formidable character of the work of arranging and classifying such a mass of documents. The papers were secured in cases, each containing correspondence for one or more years, tied up in bundles. An attempt had been made to indicate the subjects by titles, but there had been no effort to arrange them according to any sort of systematic classification. Each title, of which there were 82,000, carried a variable number of enclosures. I have in round figures estimated the documents at 300,000 (given by a typographical error in one of my reports as 200,000), but I think that an actual count would show them to be about 400,000—probably more.

"The first thing to be determined on was the system of arrangement to be adopted. I have said that I was turned loose into three empty rooms. I had now a mass of unsorted documents to deal with. Being entirely alone, I had full scope to adopt any system I chose, without let, hindrance, or remonstrance. First, then, I adopted, as the foundation, the chronological order, so that the record of events might follow naturally, no matter who was the recorder. Next, as in dealing with these documents, it would be impossible to have them indexed, even imperfectly, for years, the most practicable way would be to divide them into subjects, breaking them up, as it were, into fragments for mastication. In much of the correspondence this was comparatively easy, from the general official rule (not always, however, observed) of treating only one subject in each letter. There are numerous exceptions to this. The Queen's father, the Duke of Kent, who was in command in North America, was one of the greatest offenders, his letters dealing at length with all sorts of subjects, whilst the Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief, Her Majesty's uncle, deals with one subject at a time, and one only. They had one peculiarity in common, Each had a secretary, who wrote a beautifully clear hand, a characteristic also of the royal brothers, as, in fact, of most of the gentlemen at the end of the last and beginning of the present century.

"Having decided on the first principle of arrangement—namely, that it was to be chronological—I proceeded with that, in the first place, by means of tin boxes, each with four pigeon holes. These I had arranged round the four walls of one of the rooms, and by taking a limited number of years, I was able to get the letters, returns, accounts, memorials, &c., arranged by years, months, and finally days of the month. It should be borne in mind, that the documents were of many shapes and sizes, from a scrap of paper of possibly quarter of an inch, to the largest size of paper made, and the writing and ink from the rudest and poorest up to the most cultured and the finest that could be produced. Let me remark, too, that in the earlier documents each of the covering letters had endorsed the name of the writer, the place where and the date when written, and a short but clear abstract of its contents. Gradually, as time went on, these careful notes ceased; the abstracts first became obscure and then vanished, only the date being endorsed. Much of the trouble of ascertaining the subject of the earlier documents was removed by their careful endorsement, but that advantage was lost by the modern and imperfect practice.

"The next matter to be attended to was the choice of subjects and titles.

"The first part of the work had been purely mechanical, the arrangement of documents according to dates requiring no special qualifications beyond industry and patience. The next, however, demanded a little more brain power in order to determine the subjects and their titles, and to select the documents that should properly belong to each subject. It is clear that the latter could only be done by reading the documents; it is equally clear that to wade through each of a mass of papers, between three hundred thousand and half a million in number, meant a work of many years. But here training on the press came into play. The work of rushing daily through fyles of exchanges to select the most interesting material for the