

documents and sorting old papers. Considering the risks of fire, and the probability of an irreparable loss to the country, these circumstances will not seem to be unworthy of notice. Upon the whole, and in the interest of literature and the history of Canada, we cannot forbear expressing our conviction of the advantages that would be secured if these valuable historical memoranda were carefully looked after and preserved.

The regular fying away of official documents received, and of copies of official correspondence, as practised in all our public departments, followed by the publication of annual reports, leads to the rapid accumulation of public records, of the nature of Archives. These, together with the Bills, Acts, and Returns to Parliamentary Addresses, amount, in the course of every few years, to an unmanageable mass of documents, unless there be at the same time a convenient system providing for their safe custody, and facilities of access to them for search and for future reference.

It is understood that the means of attaining these objects in France are as perfect as they could be expected under a *quasi*-despotic form of government. The Historical Society of Quebec has already profitted by those opportunities, so as to find and obtain copies of many valuable papers amongst the French Archives relating to the early history of Canada.

In England, the Public Records were formerly dispersed in upwards of sixty different places. Within a few years past, a vast building has been erected in London for the reception of them all. It contains more than two hundred distinct apartments, affording space for more than half a million cubic feet of documents, and accommodation not merely for existing records, but also for all that are expected to accrue in the next half-century. The building is fire-proof throughout, and the whole under the charge of an official styled "Master of the Rolls." He receives from the various Departments of State, the Parliament, Courts of Common Law, of Chancery, the Admiralty, and many others, Records above twenty years old. All are catalogued for convenience of reference, and any person may make a search and copy extracts on payment of a small fee; but a *bona-fide literary* inquirer can obtain searches and copies of documents in pencil without any charge, provided he can satisfy the deputy-keeper that his purpose is really of a literary nature. The extent to which this privilege is appreciated by literary persons is wonderful, it being not uncommon for a single individual to consult four or five thousand documents within one year. Such is the excellence of the arrangements, that only a very few minutes elapse before an applicant's demand is complied with, whatever be the nature and date of the document required.

There is also in London a distinct establishment for preserving Wills, called Doctors' Commons. The original wills are required to be deposited here before they can be legally administered to by executors. These date from the year 1483 down to the present time; but there are copies of still older instruments beginning with 1383. Any person, for a small fee, may procure the perusal of a will, the search