

INTRODUCTION

Already the accumulation of materials relating to Canadian history secured by the Canadian Archives is very voluminous, and of such range and value that it will henceforth be impossible to make any considerable contribution to Canadian history without drawing upon these resources.

Now that these collections are adequately housed in a separate building, it is possible for all who wish to consult them to do so with facility and comfort. However, in a country of such vast extent as Canada, it requires both time and means for more than a very limited number to avail themselves of these valuable accumulations at first hand. Hitherto, also, the pressing demands of the more immediate needs of life leave, for most, little leisure for the cultivation of those studies connected with the origin and significance of our national institutions, the right comprehension of which may have an important bearing on the future stability of national life.

In order that the character of the records accumulated by the Archives department may be made known to the public, and that the advantages to be derived from an acquaintance with these materials may be equally shared by teachers, students and citizens of Canada generally, in all parts of the country, it has been considered advisable to select and publish in a connected form, a number of the more important and representative documents relating to specific features of Canadian national development. The present volume is the first of a short series which will embody the leading documents relating to Canadian constitutional history. The collection is intended to furnish, in the shape of authentic copies of original documents, a survey of the gradual development of the Canadian system of government and of the various forces which, in co-operation or conflict, had much to do with determining the lines along which our destiny as a nation was to be unfolded. It has been sought to make the series of documents sufficiently full and representative of all the constituent elements and interests of the country, to furnish a basis for an intelligent and independent judgment on the part of those making a careful study of them; while the notes and references will enable the reader to follow the natural connections of the documents with each other and with a still wider range of first hand materials, most of which will also be found in the collections of the Canadian Archives.

This first volume contains only documents relating to the central portion of Canada known at the time as the Province of Quebec, between the period of the Cession and the passing of the Constitutional Act in 1791. In order to present a natural historical development of the constitution the documents are arranged as nearly as possible in chronological order. They consist of both primary and secondary materials. The primary docu-