

correspondence at Halifax, which Mr. Brymner secured for Ottawa. There were in all 82,000 titles, or, in round figures, 300,000 documents! These Mr. Brymner, left wholly to his own devices, determined to arrange in chronological order, and his description of the task must be read by those inquirers who would know how much they are in his debt.

The collection covers the period from 1785 to 1870, and relates, not only to purely military affairs, but to a number of questions that are partly military, partly economic, diplomatic, or concerned with the progress of settlement and the growth of communities. "To facilitate research," says the Archivist, "I had an index placed in each volume," and this index comprises "every name of every person and place mentioned, together with such subjects as could be briefly stated." To relieve the drudgery of indexing, Mr. Brymner began to make abstracts—specimens of which have been published since 1884—of the Haldimand and Bouquet collections as they arrived. This made the documents readily accessible and insured thorough revision of the copies. On doubtful points lists were made and transmitted to London for examination, and thus "as exact copies have been secured as it is possible to obtain in transcribed documents." In no case has any variation from the original been allowed. In addition to the larger collection there are several smaller ones of miscellaneous character. The registers of early Acadia have been copied as far as they could be obtained, as well as those of the French settlements in the West.

In the Report for 1881 Mr. Brymner discusses the whole subject of keeping public records, illustrating his conclusions by the history of the English Public Record Office, the work of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, and the method of record-keeping in Scotland—based in every case on personal inquiry. In the volume for 1882, in asking for enlarged space, he showed the extent and nature of the ground to be covered, if the Archives were to be of national rather than merely local usefulness. The Reports for these two years should be carefully read by those who would have a correct notion of Mr. Brymner's aim and *modus operandi*. "In order," he writes, "to make the papers there (in the Archives department) easily accessible, it is necessary that there should be room to arrange systematically the various documents, manuscript or printed, according to provinces, subjects and periods, besides divisions being set apart for those of a general nature, bearing more or less directly on the interests of the Dominion or the provinces, such as, to mention two instances, commercial and vital statistics." Mr. Brymner then divides the whole course of Canadian history into ten periods—that of the French régime, of each province and the Territories from the date of organization under various influence and control to 1867, or their admission, later, into the Confederation—these divisions being, in some cases, subdivided for convenience of arrangement and consultation. He suggests a supplementary or complementary division for Newfoundland. The importance of having a general collection of historical documents for the Dominion and a special one for each province, Mr. Brymner insists on not only to save investigators needless trouble and expense, but as a guarantee against the total loss by fire of valuable papers.

Having prepared his "plan of campaign," Mr.

Brymner lost no time in putting it vigorously into execution. "I, therefore," he says, "conceived it to be absolutely necessary to set about the work of collecting, as at least a beginning, the printed journals, sessional papers, departmental reports, etc., of all the provinces. The attempt to obtain the earliest of these records has been fairly successful. The gathering of them as they are issued; the securing of pamphlets, new and old, even of fly-sheets, has been carefully attended to. In several cases the early provincial records in printed form (on the shelves of the Archives Bureau) are much more complete than those in the libraries of the Provincial Legislatures."

How valuable papers, which to the inexperienced might seem absolutely worthless, may sometimes prove to the historical inquirer, Mr. Brymner illustrates by a citation from the writings of a modern Egyptologist: "The relations of one monarch to another have been found on scraps of vases, chips of wood and fragments of papyri." The only sure rule is "that nothing be lost," and it is his rigid adherence to this rule, with his admirable patience and conscientious regard for scrupulous accuracy in transcription, which makes Mr. Brymner's work so invaluable to the student or writer of history, or the interested seeker of important information—Like hundreds of others, we can, moreover, give our personal testimony to the courtesy and painstaking with which he answers all inquiries addressed to him, whether the knowledge sought affect an individual or a family, or be of moment in deciding a historical question. We say this, not for the benefit of Mr. Brymner, who does not need our praise, but to let our more distant readers know that the wealth of knowledge in our Archives is accessible to all.

The Reports now published began with the short preliminary one issued with that of the Minister of Agriculture for the calendar year, 1872. That Report is worthy of a place in Mr. Johnson's enumeration of "First Things," and as marking the inception of a work which is now one of the most important departments of the Civil Service of the Dominion, has a value greatly disproportionate to its bulk. The next Report (for 1873) gives an account of Mr. Brymner's visit to the Tower of London, the Public Records Office and the British Museum, and synopses of the Bouquet and Haldimand collections. Then comes (1874) the special Report of Abbé Verreault's Mission to Europe. M. Verreault was ignorant at the time of Mr. Brymner's previous mission, so that he gave his attention to some of the manuscripts that Mr. Brymner had already examined. His Report is, nevertheless, as might be expected from his learning and experience, of very real value, and, where his inquiry was covered by Mr. Brymner, he was able to confirm that gentleman's conclusions and recommendations. Especially valuable are his investigations in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Archives of the Marine and the Foreign Office, Paris. He also visited Lille, Brussels, Liège, Metz, Rouen, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Toulouse, Annécy, Grenoble and Pizanzon Castle (the two last places having associations with Mgr. Saint-Valier, second Bishop of Quebec), and discovered that French manuscripts relating to Canada had, during the Revolution, been taken to St. Petersburg and placed in the Imperial Library of that city.

The Report for 1881 was the first issued in a separate volume, and ever since the appearance of Mr. Brymner's yearly Report has been eagerly

looked for by every student of Canadian history. Nine such volumes have already been published, on the value of which both intrinsically and as indicating the progress of the work of collecting, transcription and classification, we need not dwell. In 1883 Mr. Brymner returned to London and obtained much more favourable conditions for transcribing state papers than the rules in force would allow. What is thought of his labours in England is shown as well by these privileges as by the following extract from the Forty-third Annual Report of the Public Record Office: "Since Mr. Brymner's return to Canada he has made a most interesting Report on the subject of his inquiries in Great Britain, which has been printed, and a copy of which, with the permission of the Canadian Ministry, is annexed to this Report. It has been annexed as printed in Canada. Although there are many statements therein which are already mentioned in various Reports of the Departmental Keeper of the Public Records, it contains much other useful and interesting information on the Records of the United Kingdom, and merits a wider circulation in this country as giving the opinion of an officer not connected with the English Records and as affording a well deserved testimony to the praiseworthy exertions of Mr. Brymner."

In July, 1883, Mr. Brymner had the happiness to receive as Assistant Archivist, Mr. Joseph Marmette, a well known French-Canadian *littérateur*, the results of whose investigations in France are published in the Reports for 1883, 1885, 1886 and 1887. When the work of transcription has been completed, the Archives will be enriched by a mass of material, the importance of which Mr. Marmette has indicated in these volumes. At present, besides the documents already mentioned, the shelves contain the series headed "America and the West Indies" from the year 1755 onward, which include valuable sources of knowledge on the events of the great struggle then begun; the "Colonial Series," Loyalist papers, parish and notarial registers, the publications—some 400 volumes—of the British Public Record Office, and a select library of works of prime importance—some of them rare—on our general and local annals, statistics, colonization, etc. "My ambition," writes Mr. Brymner, in concluding his paper before the Historical Association, "aims at the establishment of a great storehouse of the history of the colonies and colonists in their political, ecclesiastically, industrial, domestic, in a word, in every aspect of their lives as communities. Included in this should be the history of the old French régime in Acadia, Canada, Louisiana and the West; of all the British colonies in America, from their beginning down at least to 1796, when the last of the frontier posts were transferred to the United States. The fortunes of all were so intertwined that it is impossible to separate the records of them without injury. It may be a dream, but it is a noble dream. It has often spurred me to renewed effort, when the daily drudgery—for it is drudgery—was telling on mind and body. It might be accomplished, and Ottawa might become on this continent the Mecca to which historical investigators would turn their eyes and direct their steps. But who is sufficient for the task?"

If the old proverb be true, the task is half accomplished already, and the opinions that we have quoted from experts on both sides of the Atlantic do not lead us to apprehend that it will be left unfinished.