

still richer field in which we have scarcely commenced to work. Under the French régime and under the English domination, we find a long list of illustrious persons whose careers were intimately bound up with Canada. In the hands of the descendants of many of these families there are priceless treasures, which must find a place in our archives before we are in a position to offer to our students the material for a comprehensive history. Some progress has been made during the past year towards collecting records of this nature. A few months ago an examination was made by Mr. Biggar of the Selkirk collection in Scotland, and over three thousand private papers were found which throw a flood of light on the state of Canadian society between 1810 and 1830. The Durham papers, which, no doubt, will prove of special value, have been placed at our disposal for transcription, and the present Earl of Durham has generously offered to present some original documents to the Archives Branch. Two other important collections, the Townshend and Chatham papers, have also been removed to the Public Record Office in London, in order that they may be examined by our representatives, and some originals were sent from the Archives of the Department of Finistère to Paris to facilitate our work.

These are instances of what may be brought to light by research; but the efforts that we are able to put forth in this direction are not in accordance with our requirements. To carry out an extensive scheme for the collection of Canadian archives would seem to be a noble and patriotic work, well worthy of the serious consideration of the Government and of the members of both Houses. The adoption of such a plan would involve an increased expenditure for a time, but the outlay would be trifling compared with the advantages, immediate and future, to be derived therefrom. I think therefore that it should be our desire and our duty to gather the material for the student which will enable him to trace the progress of the centuries; to record the trials we have undergone and the triumphs we have achieved; to bring out in relief the characters and passions which the ages have developed; to mark the institution of reforms and the exercise of energies, and to distinguish the opposing elements through which we have struggled towards political freedom. It may be argued that there is no undue haste for the acquisition of these records, since the sources may be available to us in years to come. We should not, however, overlook the fact that fire annually consumes countless records, and that many of them have already suffered from damp and other agencies. But the strongest plea that can be urged for immediate action is, that students in Canada are at a disadvantage when compared with the students of Europe or the United States. In England, from time to time, Select Committees of the House have been charged with an investigation of everything concerning the preservation and publication of archives. After enquiries lasting for months, and taking the evidence of scholars and experts, the Committees have reported that the Public Records afford the most pure and ample sources of history, the best evidence of the progress of civilization, of the growth of institutions, and of the manners and customs of the country. They have also urged the necessity of increasing the knowledge of archives and of extending access to them. As a result of these investigations, students have the privilege of consulting the magnificent series of State Papers published by authority, and also the exceedingly useful volumes published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, to which additions are made annually. The publication of these, and similar papers, has led to the revision of much of the history of England.