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PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN CANADA.

THERE was a time, shortly after the discovery of printing, when it was possible for a man like Casaubon to say that he knew the contents, more or less thoroughly, of every printed book. But the limits of human endurance were speedily passed, and to-day the enormous mass of literature taxes the ingenuity of the librarians to mould it into organized form. Each successive generation adds its own stratum, and the whole forms the storehouse from which the new generation draws its inspiration and facts. This is especially true of the scientific worker, dependent on the accumulation of minute facts, recorded by long series of patient observers. It is for this reason, therefore, that I bring before you, an institution devoted to science, a paper on the libraries of the Dominion.

The art of printing was introduced into the infant colonies at a very early period. In Halifax the *Gazette* was published in 1756, the first born of a numerous progeny, and was followed by the *Quebec Gazette* in 1764. In 1779 a number of the officers stationed at Quebec, and of the leading merchants, undertook the formation of a subscription library. The Governor, General Haldimand, took an active part in the work, and ordered on behalf of the subscribers £500 worth of books from London. The selection was entrusted to Richard

Cumberland, dramatist, and an interesting letter from the Governor, addressed to him, describing the literary wants of the town and the class of books to be sent, is now in the Public Archives, Ottawa. The books arrived in due course, and while no catalogue has survived, I think it would not be difficult to name a large proportion of them. The book world in which Dr. Johnson moved was yet a small one. A room for their reception was granted in the Bishop's Palace, and as late as 1806 we learn from Lambert's Travels that it was the only library in Canada. Removed several times, it slowly increased, until in 1822 it numbered 4,000 volumes. The list of subscribers having become very much reduced, it was leased to the Quebec Literary Association in 1843. In 1854 a portion of it was burnt with the Parliament Building, where it was then quartered, and, finally, in 1866, the entire library, consisting of 6,999 volumes, were sold, subject to conditions, to the Literary and Historical Society for a nominal sum of \$500.

PROVINCIAL LIBRARIES.

Naturally, on the organization of each of the Provinces, libraries were established in connection with the Legislature. In Upper Canada the small library in the Parliament Building was destroyed by the Americans,