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The Canadian Archives and the Writing of Canadian History

Presidential Address

Duncan McArthur

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THE CANADIAN ARCHIVES AND THE WRITING OF CANADIAN HISTORY

Presidential Address Delivered by

DUNCAN McARTHUR

"Il y aurait eu de grands vides dans mon histoire, si je n'avais trouvé de quoi les remplir dans les pièces originales qui se conservent au dépôt de la Marine." Such was the confession of the Abbé Charlevoix, pioneer of Canadian historians, in 1744. The earliest efforts to reconstruct the history of Canada revealed an appreciation of the value of official records. Other early historians, likewise, realized the limitations imposed on historical scholarship in this country by reason of the difficulty of obtaining access to such original records. "Lorsque nous avons commencé cet ouvrage, nous n'avions pas la correspondance officielle des gouverneurs français avec la métropole, jusqu'à la conquête, et nous ne possédions qu'un petit nombre des documents relatifs à notre histoire sous la domination anglaise." Thus did Garneau, on the appearance of the first volume of his *Histoire du Canada* in 1844, express a consciousness of the restraints attributable to the inadequacy of source-materials.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the French people in Canada had become conscious of a common interest distinguishing them from their neighbours in America and from their compatriots in France. Out of this group consciousness there might have emerged a critical history of the country and its people had not the cession to Britain and the domination of British commercial and political institutions impressed on the mind of the French Canadian the subordination of his culture and ideals to those of the dominant power. For a century French Canada produced no successor to Charlevoix. The nationalism of French Canada, smouldering in sullen resentment for half a century, broke out in flame in the controversies which preceded, and which followed immediately upon, the Union of 1841, an expedient, in the mind of the Nationalist, designed to complete the subjection of French-Canadian ideals to the control of the British community. Conditions such as these determined the outlook of Garneau, the first of a new order of historians of Canada. In the decade of the 1860's there appeared the Abbé Ferland's *Cours d'histoire du Canada* and Faillon's *Histoire de la colonie française en Canada*.

What materials did these writers possess with which to reconstruct the history of the Canadian people?

Charlevoix, a disciple of Loyola, had leaned heavily on the *Relations* and other records of the Jesuit Order. These records, along with the narrative of Charlevoix, constituted a most significant source for the history of the French régime. There were the works of Lescarbot, of Champlain, of special value for an understanding of the character of the country and of its native inhabitants; the early history of the church had been told by Le Clerq and Sagard; the Abbé La Tour's *Mémoire sur la vie de M. de Laval* was regarded as authoritative. Much valuable information was derived from the local histories of Dollier de Casson, of Belmont, and of Pierre Boucher. Official documentary sources, however, were limited virtually to the records of the Sovereign Council and the registers of the

courts of Quebec, Three Rivers, and Montreal. A volume of *Edits, ordonnances royales, déclarations et arrêts du Conseil d'État du Roi* had been published in 1803 and in 1808 a selection of *Edits et ordonnances* of the colonial Council. The most serious handicap under which the historian of that day laboured was the difficulty of consulting the correspondence between the French government and the administrative officers of the colony.

Of the craftsmen who laboured at the middle of the last century the Abbé Faillon enjoyed peculiar advantages. Before coming to Canada he had made himself familiar with various aspects of the life of the French colony through the researches required for the preparation of an exhaustive work on M. Olier, the founder of the Order of St. Sulpice. During his residence in Canada between 1858 and 1862, he made use of the invaluable materials preserved in the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Montreal, and after his return to Europe he spent much time in consulting the records found in the Archives of Paris and of Rome.

But what of Garneau and of Ferland and their contemporaries? The observation of Garneau, to which reference has been made, appeared in the preface to the third edition of his history which appeared in 1859, and suggests by implication an improvement over the conditions existing fifteen years earlier. There was ample justification for such a suggestion. In 1839 the Legislature of the State of New York passed an act providing for the appointment of an agent to visit England, Holland, and France for the purpose of procuring the originals or copies of documents in the Archives of those governments relating to the early history of that state, and two years later Colonel John R. Broadhead was chosen as agent. During the years 1843 and 1844 Colonel Broadhead conducted investigations at Paris in the Archives of the Departments of War, of Marine, and the Colonies and caused to be transcribed the records subsequently designated "Paris Documents" and published as volumes IX and X of the monumental work, *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* edited by E. B. O'Callaghan. A copy of these documents, consisting chiefly of correspondence between the French government and the governors and intendants of New France, was presented to the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec in 1845. A brief survey of the contents of these documents was published in 1858 in the *Catalogue* of the Parliamentary Library of Canada. These transcripts, which came to be known as "Documents de Paris, Première série", naturally constituted a most valuable collection of source-materials and were used extensively by the Abbé Ferland.

In 1851 M. Georges Faribault was commissioned by the government of Canada to proceed to France and to obtain copies of documents deposited in the archives of that country relating to the early history of Canada. This work was undertaken in the two years following and resulted in the formation of a "Deuxième série" and a "Troisième série" of Paris Documents in the custody of the Library of Parliament. These records were supplemented by others obtained later in the same decade and by a collection of copies of maps relating to Canada made from originals in Paris and designated "Cinquième série". By 1860, therefore, a beginning had been made in the collection of copies of official correspondence relating to the French régime, but the problem had not yet been

tackled in a comprehensive and systematic manner and the documents copied represented but a small part of those available.

The British element in the Canadian population had not yet produced a historian of distinctive merit. William Smith, clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada and son of Lord Dorchester's Chief Justice, had completed in 1812 a two-volume history of the country which was not published until 1826. This work, which displayed a lack of critical insight, was valuable, however, in presenting an orderly narrative of events in Lower Canada with which the author was familiar. John MacMullen's *History of Canada*, first published in 1855, represented, according to the author, an "endeavour to arrange methodically whatever of value is to be gleaned from these sources", *i.e.*, books and statistical works relating to Canada. Mr. Christie's *History of Lower Canada*, published in 1866, relied to a much greater extent on documentary source-materials. The records of the Legislative Council and Assembly constitute his chief authorities, although for the period prior to 1791 he had access to such materials as the reports of Thurlow and Wedderburn on Canadian affairs, of which manuscript copies were in the possession of Mr. Faribault, then a vice-president of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec. This society had rendered most useful service by the publication between 1838 and 1868 of many valuable historical documents such as memoirs of Talon, of Hocquart, of de Ramezay, the Abbé Belmont's *Histoire du Canada* and the *Voyages* of Cartier and Roberval. The historians of the British régime, however, were placed under a most serious handicap by reason of their inability to consult the correspondence which passed between the British governmental agencies and the colonial governors.

It is not surprising, therefore, that public-spirited persons interested in the preparation of an adequate record of the growth of the country should have sought to remove these disabilities. In 1871 a petition "numerously signed by influential persons" was presented to the Parliament of the Dominion setting forth that "authors and literary inquirers are placed in a very disadvantageous position in this country in comparison with persons of the same class in Great Britain, France and the United States, in consequence of being practically debarred from facilities of access to the public records, documents and official papers in manuscript illustrative of the history and progress of society in Canada" and praying that steps should be taken to have the Archives of Canada collected. The petition was referred to the Joint Library Committee of both Houses, which recommended that suitable action should be taken under the supervision of the Minister of Agriculture as Minister of Arts and Statistics, in whose custody documents of such a character should be kept. In the session of 1872 Parliament voted the sum of \$4,000 to cover the cost of an inquiry into the extent and condition of the public records relating to the history of Canada, and Mr. Douglas Brymner was appointed the first Archivist of the Dominion. Mr. Brymner was an able journalist of wide and varied experience. His contributions both in prose and verse to various periodicals had already established his reputation as a skilled literary workman. An appreciation of the problems of the author and an intense interest in the history of the country fitted him admirably for the task to which he was now entrusted.

Mr. Brymner's first task was to make a survey of the papers stored

in the several provincial capitals and to endeavour to recover official documents which had passed into the possession of private individuals. These investigations revealed the existence at Halifax of a series of 200,000 documents relating to the activities of the British military forces in the several North American provinces. Arrangements had been made for the transfer of these records to the War Office in London, but, at the request of the government of Canada, they were sent to Ottawa. This most valuable collection, classified in systematic order and bound in a series of nearly 1,100 volumes, constituted the first substantial contribution to our national Archives. In 1873 the Abbé Verreau, then principal of the Jacques Cartier Normal School, Montreal, was commissioned to go to Europe to make a survey of the records relating to the history of Canada contained in the various public repositories of the two mother-countries. His investigations extended to the British Public Record Office, the British Museum, the Royal Institution, to the Bibliothèque Nationale and the several departmental Archives in Paris, and to the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg whence various records had been taken from Paris during the disturbances of the French Revolution.

The investigations conducted in London suggested the advisability of obtaining copies of two collections of manuscripts, the papers of General Haldimand, who had been Governor of the district of Three Rivers during the military régime and had succeeded Guy Carleton as the Governor of the colony in 1778, and of his friend Colonel Bouquet who had served with the British forces in America during the Seven Years' War and in the operations against the Indians during the Pontiac uprising. These papers, presented to the British Museum by a descendant of General Haldimand, were deemed important in filling a gap in the period immediately following the conquest, which to the historian was still clouded in obscurity. The copying of the Haldimand manuscripts was made possible by a special appropriation in the year 1878-9. By 1881 both the Haldimand Papers, comprising 232 volumes, and the Bouquet Papers of thirty volumes, had been transcribed and were being sent to Ottawa. Already, in 1875, a "suite of fire-proof rooms" had been provided in the basement storey of the West Block of the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa for the housing of the Dominion's Archives. These two valuable collections now took their place beside the military records obtained from Halifax. In the meantime many volumes of official and semi-official records had been obtained from the several provincial capitals and even from private sources. In 1881 the Archivist felt justified in reporting that "the value of the collection is gradually beginning to be appreciated, and the wisdom of the decision to have complete copies of the collections selected has been fully justified by the acknowledgements of the investigators who had obtained valuable historical information from what must appear to many very unpromising material". Mr. Brymner recommended that a complete investigation should be made in the Public Record Office and State Departments in London and in Paris and that copies should be made of such documents found there as were of value to the student of Canadian history.

As the manuscript copies of the several volumes of the Haldimand and, later, of the Bouquet Papers were received in Ottawa, they were bound in volumes corresponding to the originals in the British Museum.

Mr. Brymner now undertook the laborious task of preparing calendars which constituted a relatively adequate guide to the contents of the entire correspondence. Between 1884 and 1889 the calendars of these collections were published, providing students of Canadian history with a detailed summary of the contents of the most extensive collection of documentary source-materials which had yet been made available. A most significant step had been taken in the popularizing of the documentary source-materials of Canadian history.

The objective fixed by Mr. Brymner at this time was the transcription of the more important series of documents relating to Canada in the public repositories in Britain and in France. In few cases, however, were these documents segregated in separate and independent series or even in the Archives of a single department of government. It was necessary, therefore, to conduct an intensive investigation into the contents of many series of documents preserved in the records of several branches of government both in London and in Paris before an intelligent selection could be made of the records which justified transcription, particularly because up to this time no adequate guides to their public records had been prepared by the governments of Britain or of France. The work of the Abbé Verreau was continued by Mr. Joseph Marmette who was appointed in 1883 as representative of the Canadian Archives in France. Mr. Marmette began the preparation of calendars of the more important series of official records in the French Public Archives relating to Canada. The reports of the Archives Branch for 1885 and 1887 contained calendars of the "Correspondance générale", being the correspondence of administrative officers in Canada with the ministers in France preserved in the Department of the Marine. In this case a different procedure was followed from that adopted with the Haldimand Papers. The calendars were prepared from the original documents in France and were published before the documents were transcribed. But their publication created such a demand for reference to the original documents that their copying became essential.

Reference need be made here to two only of the other series of documents obtained from France. In a most exhaustive report published as a supplement to the *Annual Report* of the Archivist for 1889, Mr. Edouard Richard, Mr. Marmette's successor, published detailed calendars of the Series B, being the registers of the instructions and letters sent by the King or his ministers to the governors, intendants, and other officers in the colonies, and constituting the counterpart of the "Correspondance générale". The Richard report contained, likewise, a calendar of a most valuable collection known as the "Moreau St. Méry Collection". These papers, comprising 287 large volumes, were assembled by Moreau St. Méry, a Parisian advocate, in the course of his preparation of an extensive treatise on the laws and constitution of the French colonies in America, which appeared in 1784. Although the collection included copies of documents found in official series, it did contain many letters not then available elsewhere. Both the B Series and the Moreau St. Méry Collection were copied for the Archives and, along with the "Correspondance générale", provided a relatively adequate picture of the life of New France as revealed in the official correspondence of its administrators.

In the meantime attention had been directed to the minute examination of correspondence in the Public Record Office in London relating to the

history of the Maritime Provinces and of Canada subsequent to the conquest. The correspondence of the Governors and Lieutenant-Governors of the Canadian colonies with the Secretary of State, constituting the most important part of this material, was supplemented by correspondence with the Board of Trade and other public offices. The task of transcribing the Colonial Office Papers relating to Canada, designated the Q Series, was undertaken soon after the completion of the copying of the Bouquet Papers. This series, comprising nearly nine hundred volumes, covered the period from 1760 to 1840 and constituted the most important collection of documents acquired by the Public Archives. Mr. Brymner now undertook the most arduous task of preparing calendars of these papers, calendars which were published with the *Annual Reports* of the Archivist beginning in 1890 and continuing to 1902. The like correspondence for the several Maritime colonies had also been copied and calendared, the calendars appearing in the *Reports* of the Archivist for 1894 and 1895. The transcribing of the Q Series, and the publication of the calendars, marked the beginning of a new epoch in the writing of the history of Canada. There was revealed the existence at Ottawa of a veritable gold-mine of information relating to the history of the country, information hitherto available only in the British Public Record Office.

By this time, however, the information contained in these records was finding its way into treatises dealing with various aspects of the history of the United States and of Canada. One of the first workmen to extract ore from this rich mine was Theodore Roosevelt. The first volume of Roosevelt's *Winning of the West* appeared in 1889. In a preface which set forth in detail the source-materials employed in the preparation of the work, Roosevelt made this acknowledgment: "Among the most valuable of the hitherto untouched manuscripts which I have obtained, are the Haldimand papers, preserved in the Canadian Archives at Ottawa. They give, for the first time, the British and Indian side of all the northwestern fighting." The *Atlantic Monthly* review of this volume makes reference to the author's reliance on documents found in the Canadian Archives "unrivalled on this continent for materials in Western history". Justin Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of America*, completed likewise in 1889, contains evidence of the use of materials found in the Canadian Archives, particularly in its treatment of the northern campaign of the Revolutionary War. In a series of critical essays on source-materials, that relating to Canada prepared by the late Dr. George Bryce paid tribute to "the most remarkable service done to the history of this period" (1763-91) by the Canadian Archives.

The first volume of William Kingsford's *History of Canada* appeared in 1887 and volume IV, which completed his treatment of the period of French domination, in 1890. These volumes bear little evidence of reliance on manuscript source-materials, but the subsequent volumes, published between 1892 and 1898 and carrying the story of Canada to the union of the provinces in 1841, lean heavily on the documents contained in the Q Series and B Series of the Canadian Archives. Kingsford's later volumes were written as the calendars of the Q Series were being prepared. The references to the documents which had been calendared are much more frequent than those to uncalendared correspondence. There is ample justification for the inference that those sections of the Q Series

which were not calendared at the time each succeeding volume of the Kingsford history was prepared were not consulted to any extensive degree by the author.

The six volumes of the Kingsford work which appeared in as many years bear unmistakable signs of hasty preparation and of the inability of the author to assimilate the vast mass of materials placed within his reach. Despite its many obvious defects, Kingsford's *History*, however, did carry to a wide circle of students an intimation of the existence in the Archives of a treasury of information regarding the early history of the country; despite the inaccuracy in detail of many of the documents transcribed, the work conveyed an impression of the nature of part at least of the official correspondence which hitherto had been known only from the official *Reports* of the Archivist.

The records in the Canadian Archives did not long escape the notice of the professional investigator. Among the pioneers of historical research who frequented the crowded and poorly lighted rooms occupied by Dr. Brymner were Professor A. C. McLaughlin and Professor Adam Shortt. In his study of "The Western Posts and British Debts" presented to the American Historical Association in 1894, Professor McLaughlin demonstrated before an extensive and appreciative audience the importance of the Archives sources in the study of the early history of Anglo-American relations. From the early nineties Adam Shortt had haunted the Archives during his summer vacations and had delved deeply into the contents of the Q Series and the Haldimand Papers. His interest centred naturally in the field of economic history. In 1896 and 1897 he published a series of papers, based chiefly on Archives sources, under the titles of *The Early History of Canadian Banking* and *Currency and Exchange after the Conquest*. This intimate association, profitable to the Archives as well as to the teacher and author, continued without interruption for a period of forty years. Among the first of Shortt's pupils to be directed to the Canadian Archives for intensive research was W. B. Munro, then a graduate student at Harvard, whose study of the seigniorial system in Canada was made possible by the transcription of the Paris Documents. The graduate schools of the West as well as of the East were turning to the Archives materials for purposes of research. In 1896 the University of Wisconsin published Victor Coffin's *The Province of Quebec and the Early American Revolution*. "The main study", said Dr. Coffin in the preface, "is based almost entirely on the manuscript copies of British State Papers in the Canadian Archives." In 1907 Professor Justin Smith of Dartmouth published *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*. There is scarcely a page of this minutely detailed study but acknowledges an obligation to source-materials found in the Canadian Archives.

Mention should be made in this connection of papers presented at various times to the Royal Society of Canada in which there is evidence of reliance on the documents in the Archives. Such papers prepared by the Abbé Gosselin, Sulte, Léon Gérin, Chapais, De Celles, Poirier, may still be consulted with profit by the student of Canadian history.

A definite period in the history of the Canadian Archives was terminated by the death of Dr. Brymner in 1902. Canadian historical scholarship owes a debt to Dr. Brymner which this generation may find it difficult to comprehend. Dr. Brymner presided over the birth of the

Canadian Archives; he nursed it in infancy, and provided with wisdom and foresight for its growth to vigorous maturity.

The selection of Arthur G. Doughty as Dominion Archivist was particularly happy. At the time of his appointment Dr. Doughty held the position of joint-librarian of the Legislative Library of the Province of Quebec and has already demonstrated his skill as an investigator and craftsman in his detailed study of the Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham.

Dr. Doughty's interests and habits of mind differed in many respects from those of his predecessor. It was inevitable, therefore, that the change in navigating officers should involve a shifting in the course to be followed by the Canadian Archives. Dr. Doughty's peculiar aptitudes made him the collector *par excellence*. The preparation of calendars was abandoned for the time being. Several reasons were given for this change in policy. Many years would be required to complete the preparation of calendars of documents then in the Archives; the publication of calendars tended to fix the arrangement of documents in a definite order and system whereas the problem of classification had not yet been solved; finally, it was practically impossible to convey an adequate impression of an important document in the form of a calendar. Calendars at best are deceptive. In the process of reducing the original document to a summary form it becomes practically impossible for the mind directing that process to avoid leaving on the product some mark of its workmanship.

Dr. Doughty's efforts have been directed to the achievement of two purposes—the collection of historical materials and the popularizing of the Archives as a national institution. In both of these endeavours Dr. Doughty succeeded in enlisting the enthusiastic co-operation of successive Governors-General and of ministers of the Crown. Students of Canadian history do not realize the extent of the debt they owe to the discriminating interest in the Dominion Archives manifested by Lord Minto and by Lord Grey—an interest which continued active and fruitful long after they had returned to Britain.

The first task of the new Archivist was to make a survey of the official records preserved in the several departments at Ottawa. This survey revealed the existence of a large mass of material of the utmost historical importance. Agents were appointed, likewise, for the investigation of records kept in private repositories in the Maritime Provinces, in Quebec, and in Ontario. The need for a fireproof building to house adequately the Dominion's public records had now been demonstrated. As a result of the active interest of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and of the Honourable Sydney Fisher, the Minister in charge of the Archives, a new building was provided and opened early in 1907. The way was now cleared for the assembling in one place of the public records which were known to exist and to belong properly to a national Archives. To the series collected by Dr. Brynmner were now added such important materials as the records of the office of the Secretary of State, of the Privy Council (including the State Books containing the minutes of the Executive Council from 1764), of the Militia Department, and, in particular, of the Governor-General's office. These last, constituting the G Series, included the originals of despatches sent by the Colonial Office to the Canadian governors. The original signed copies of much of the material transcribed in the G Series,

and which had always been in the possession of the government, were now transferred to the Public Archives.

Dr. Doughty's genius for acquisition was turned to supreme advantage in other directions. The owners of private collections in Canada and in Britain were induced either to donate or to sell them to the Canadian government, while in other cases transcripts were made for the Canadian Archives. To indicate their significance mention need be made of only a few of the more important of these collections, such as the Selkirk Papers, the Murray Papers, the Grey-Elgin Correspondence, the Bagot Papers, the Miles Macdonell Papers, the Claus Papers, the Neilson Papers, the Lafontaine Papers, and the Durham Papers. Through the generosity of Sir Leicester Harnsworth the Monckton Papers and the Townshend Papers were added more recently as a memorial to his distinguished brother, the late Lord Northcliffe.

In the meantime the copying of official and semi-official records was continued in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and the State Departments at Paris under the direction of Dr. H. P. Biggar. Documents relating to Canada were copied from such important collections as the Shelburne Papers, the Dartmouth Papers, and the Hardwicke Papers.

The expansion of the Canadian Archives may be regarded with justification as but one symptom of the development of a sense of national self-consciousness in the mind of the Canadian people. It was becoming aware that it possessed a history, a history from the beginning replete with achievement which contributed to a feeling of pride. The story of discovery and exploration, of the conquest of the rugged forces of nature, of the founding of the church, of schools, of institutions of government, contained elements of the heroic and left an impression of satisfaction. Dr. Brymner had made a place for the Archives in the cultural and intellectual life of the nation but that place was recognized only by the few, the experts and the specialists.

No better evidence of the growth of this sense of pride in a distinctive national achievement can be found than in the elaboration by Mr. Morang, a Toronto publisher, of a scheme for the presentation of the history of the country in a series of biographies under the general title of "The Makers of Canada". Twenty years earlier the project would not have been mooted. Its conception was due in large measure to the influence of the Canadian Archives, while in its execution the Archives played a worthy rôle.

The volumes of that series, as is inevitable in all such schemes, were of unequal merit. The materials necessary for the reconstruction of the lives of several of the subjects were not to be found in official records. Two of the most valuable volumes in the series are Miss McIlwraith's *Haldimand* and Adam Shortt's *Sydenham*. The story of Haldimand was extracted with skill and discrimination from the Haldimand Papers and the Bouquet Papers. Professor Shortt, in the preface to *Sydenham*, written in 1908, told his own story of the source of his information.

The present volume, with the exception of the portion dealing with the earlier years of Lord Sydenham's life, is based entirely upon first-hand materials, many of which are still in manuscript in the Canadian Archives. . . The most important sources, however, as revealing the inner policy of the Colonial Office and of the Canadian governor, are found in the private and confidential despatches between the Colonial secretary, Lord John Russell, and Lord Sydenham, as also in the correspondence with various parties in Canada contained in the letter-books of the Governor and Civil

Secretary. The manuscript volumes containing these papers have been lately transferred from the offices of the governor general to the Canadian Archives, and are now included in the G Series of the Archives Collections.

The policies adopted by Dr. Doughty for the purpose of converting the archives into a popular national institution fall into two classes. He made the Archives building a place of interest and of beauty by the display of historical mementos and of paintings and other pictures. An institution dependent on the support of the state cannot afford to neglect such a significant mode of contact with the public as is provided by what may be termed the historical museum. Still further, the written word not infrequently may find a most effective ally in the visual impression.

The other aspect of Archives policy, and that with which we are more directly concerned, relates to the publication of information regarding the contents of the public records. For the reasons we have already suggested the preparation of calendars of documents was discontinued. Dr. Doughty proposed as an alternative the publication of the complete texts of the more important documents dealing with various aspects of the life of the Canadian people. In pursuance of this policy the Archives published in 1907 a series of *Documents relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791*, selected and edited by Dr. Shortt and Dr. Doughty. No publication of the Archives has been read as widely or quoted as frequently as the *Constitutional Documents*, and no book of sources has influenced the writing of Canadian history to the same extent. This policy was not carried into complete execution by reason of conditions over which Dr. Doughty did not have complete control.

Further evidence, if such were needed, of the rapidly growing interest in Canadian history, and of reliance on the Archives for its writing, was presented in the formulation by Mr. Robert Glasgow of a plan for the production of a comprehensive history of the Dominion and its component parts, under the general title of *Canada and its Provinces*. This extensive work was the first of the numerous progeny of the *Constitutional Documents*. Its general editors were Dr. Shortt and Dr. Doughty, while the editorial supervision was exercised against the background of the Public Archives. No treatment of the development of the Canadian people undertaken up to this time drew to the same extent on the manuscript sources of the Archives. Many sections of this work have now become obsolete. That such a fate has befallen them is due to no other reason than that the Archives materials have become more extensive and have been explored more thoroughly. This series has served a most useful purpose during the intervening period as a general work of reference on Canadian history.

During the past twenty years the problems confronting the investigator in the field of Canadian history have assumed new and different aspects. The volume of original documentary source-materials has become so great as to baffle completely the industry and the ability of the single workman. The investigator must be content with making himself familiar with a limited period or with a single phase of the larger development. Our scholars have accepted this limitation and have devoted themselves to the intensive cultivation of the smaller plot. Not until this process has continued to such an extent as to provide thorough and minute studies of the more significant aspects of the evolution of the life of our people will it be possible to weave these many strands into an adequate

and accurate composite pattern. The final product will take the form of an amalgam of rich and diverse metals; our immediate task is to dig and refine the ore of many mines. The production in recent years of several most valuable monographs indicates that this duty is being undertaken and performed with signal success. It is not necessary that I should discuss here the merits of any one of these works. Our present concern is with the relation of the Archives to the problem of the special study and of its place in the larger and ideal unit which one may designate the "History of Canada".

I would like to suggest first, the possible advantages of the application to the processes of historical mining, to which I have referred, of the principles of a planned economy. The professional historians of this country, at least, have ceased to be individualists; they have already acquired a technique of co-operation. The lists of graduate theses published annually in the *Canadian Historical Review* are of the greatest value in advising students regarding the subjects which should *not* be undertaken. I would like to see more careful thought given to the selection of the fields which should be explored—a preliminary geological survey for the determination of the areas which may be worked to the greatest advantage. All subjects are not of equal significance nor does the extent of the material available provide equal justification for the selection of all the subjects proposed. This problem I submit to the consideration of your incoming Executive Committee. Another suggestion I would like to make relates to the use of materials now preserved in the Public Archives. The processes of acquisition have far outstripped those of organization and assimilation. We realize that at present it may not be possible to secure the appointment of trained assistants to the staff of the Public Archives. But, as soon as the condition of the treasury improves, a determined effort should be made to add to the staff of the Archives a small group of trained investigators who would be capable of making adequate indices and analyses of the material acquired in recent years. It is admitted that within limits each workman must read his own materials. But the advice of a person who had made himself intimately familiar with the contents of a series of documents, and who possessed such a training as would enable him to determine their historical significance, would be of distinct value in the first process of elimination.

It is suggested, further, that the time has arrived when we should have a comprehensive survey of the historical materials housed in repositories other than the Public Archives. The *Reports* of the several provincial Archives are of distinct value but they do not provide an adequate survey of the documents preserved in these repositories. Nor have we a complete record of the manuscripts belonging to the public libraries of the Dominion. A general survey of such material, not necessarily minute in detail, would be of inestimable value in directing the efforts of those who have proved themselves capable of contributing to the fund of knowledge of our country's history. Such a survey, I suggest, might properly be undertaken by this Association in co-operation with the several provincial or local historical societies.

I make no apology for introducing into the discussion of the relation between the Canadian Archives and the writing of history the subject of local historical materials. I have said sufficient, I trust, regarding the

achievement of the Archives to indicate that I appreciate the importance of the work it has accomplished. There is, however, in my opinion, justification for the issuing of a warning that those who work with public and official records subject themselves to two serious dangers. Official records, as a general rule, do not present a complete and wholly accurate picture of the situations they discuss. The public official, particularly the colonial governor, is seldom an impartial observer and reporter. He is frequently interested in creating in the minds of his superior officers an opinion that his own conduct has been just and commendable. The bias of the writer, whatever may be his position, should be determined and the necessary discount should be made to provide compensation for distorted statements.

The official document again, as a general rule, presents but one stage of an historical process, most probably the last in the cycle. The official document is concerned with the problems of living only when they impinge on government. The normal activities of the citizen do not bring the machinery of government into operation. Those activities, however, which do involve action on the part of the state become of peculiar significance, a significance which can be determined only in relation to the earlier stages in the process. Government is not an end in itself but an instrument for promoting what is deemed to be the well-being of the governed. Concentration on official records involves the danger of regarding the maintenance of government as the ultimate purpose of life, of divorcing the activities of public officials from the normal processes of the life of the people, processes which alone give meaning to the intervention of government. There is a real danger lest the impression of a part of the process be considered as the whole and complete process. As well might we regard a picture of a tree taken from the air as an adequate representation of the tree. It is to the personal and private record that we must turn in our search for the branches, the trunk, and the roots of the tree. Local records may perform an invaluable service in filling the gaps left blank by the official correspondence.

One other limitation of the official record deserves mention. Reference has been made to the connection between the expansion of the Public Archives and the growth of national self-consciousness. Pride of nation, however laudable, may be carried to an excess in the interpretation of public records. It is easy to assume that the Architect of the Universe had no other purposes in mind than the creation of the Canadian nation and that our experiment in nation-building was conducted in a sealed compartment. We need to be reminded that both France and Britain had other interests than their North American provinces, and that other peoples shared this continent with our ancestors both French and British. The attitude of Britain toward the colonies which later became Canada must be considered against the background of Britain's domestic policy, of her colonial and Imperial policy, and of her foreign policy. From the time of the establishment of English settlement on the Atlantic coast, there has been an interchange of influence between the seaboard and the St. Lawrence watershed. As our interests expanded and as we were swept into the stream of world affairs, the forces impinging on our development became more complex and were carried to us from far distant shores. The official document does not carry the warning that it is but a part of a complex

scheme of Imperial or continental policy. Until the investigator of to-day can place himself in the position of the author of a despatch and can scan the same horizon, he cannot interpret the document correctly and adequately.

We have reason to be proud of our historical records. It behooves us that we make the best use of them. There is a real danger, however, that our historical vision may be blurred by staring at them too intently and our judgment distorted by our failure to turn our eyes away from them.

It is possible for the writer of Canadian history to lean too heavily on the Canadian Archives. There is an element of the tragic in the life-story of the official despatch. The corporate form which we see and scrutinize with the utmost of care is a cold and lifeless body unless we can breathe into it the living vitalizing spirit which animated its author. The moment the document is written the scene has changed. When it has reached its destination, the background against which it was produced has vanished. It is an essential part of our task to capture and reconstruct the historical scene of another day as it appeared at Paris, at Rome, at London, at Philadelphia, at Washington, and to recreate that scene on the canvas of history at Ottawa. In the collection of historical source-materials we have been served with the utmost zeal and fidelity. To us there remains the more difficult and more important task—the restoration of the lifeless record to a vital connection with the body of historical fact which gave it birth. Only when such an operation has been performed will the Canadian Archives make the greatest possible contribution to the writing of Canadian history.