

**CANADIAN  
ARCHAEOLOGY:  
AN ESSAY**

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Canadian Archæology: An Essay by William Kingsford

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**WILLIAM KINGSFORD**

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# CANADIAN ARCHÆOLOGY.

AN ESSAY.

BY  
WILLIAM KINGSFORD.

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Entered according to Act of Parliament, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty-six, by W.M. DEYERDALE & Co., in the office of the Minister of Agriculture.



56,707

This Essay, in a different and a less extended form appeared in a Toronto newspaper last Autumn, with the disadvantage of having been divided into two parts with an interval of eighteen days between them. Much of the interest it might claim was lessened by this mode of publication. The present Essay has been entirely rewritten, and made to embrace a wider field of examination, and specially to include the consideration of the Archæology of the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario. It attempts to place in an accessible form much information scattered over many volumes, journals and MSS. Moreover, it brings to public notice the creation of the important public department of Archives, with some account of its establishment: a department by which the study of Canadian History must be greatly advanced, and any investigation of past events honestly and systematically directed. It is hoped that the information which the Essay attempts clearly to set forth may be not without advantage to the student of our Annals.

OTTAWA,  
2nd January, 1886.

W. K.

Ach Gott ! die Kunst ist lang,  
Und kurz ist unser Leben.  
Mir wird, bei meinem kritischen Bestreben,  
Doch oft um Kopf und Busen bang.  
Wie schwer sind nicht die Mittel zu erwerben,  
Durch die man zu den Quellen steigt !  
Und eh' man nur den halben Weg erreicht  
Muss wohl ein armer Teufel sterben.

GOETHE, FAUST.

Ah me ! but art is long  
And human life is short.  
Oft in the throes of critic thought  
Have head and heart ceased to be strong.  
How hard the means which in our effort lie  
To reach the sources of what mortals know,  
But ere a man can half the distance go  
Verily, poor devil, must he die.

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Your home born projects prove ever the best ; they are so easy and familiar ; they put too much learning in their things now-a-days.

BYRNE JOHNSON, Bartholomew Fair.

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Ist das Licht das Eigenthum der Flamme, wo nicht gar des Kerzendochte? Ich enthalte mich jedes Urtheils über solche Frage, und freue mich nur darüber, dass Ihr dem armen Dochte, der sich brennend verzehrt, eine kleine Vergütung verwilligen wolt für sein groszes gemeinnütziges Beleuchtungsverdienst !

HEINE.

Is the light the property of the flame, if it in no way be of the taper wick ? I abstain from any judgment over such a question, and I only rejoice that you are willing to make some slight amends to the poor wick, which consumes itself in burning, for its noble, universal, meritorious service of enlightenment !



## CANADIAN ARCHÆOLOGY.

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Few are aware that in the last decade an important department has been formed in Ottawa, which in an indirect way will have no little influence on our political future. A people become to a great extent what their education makes them, and education in no small degree consists in the just appreciation of past experience. Certainly such is the process of political development. For however fascinating the narrative of history, the profit of its study lies in its teaching. There is but one mode of assuring historical truth, and that is by the collection of contemporary documents systematically arranged and kept in such security that they cannot be tampered with or destroyed.

Archæology is not an old and established science in the Dominion. Practically it can trace no remote date in the Province of Quebec. In Ontario it has had scarcely a quarter of a century of active life : in the Eastern Provinces it may claim a somewhat longer existence. But the study was confined to few, although there have been spasms of effort to deal with it satisfactorily and systematically. As early as 1787 the matter was repeatedly brought before the Council, and in 1790 an Ordinance was passed at Quebec for the preservation of ancient documents ; those which bore upon the French regime. A commission was appointed and a report made to Lord Dorchester on the subject ; a list of the *Decreets, Arrêts and Ordonnances* in existence was appended. The object in view appears to have been the preservation of all documents bearing upon the history of French Canada.

Little thought was then given to contemporary documents of the period, and it is precisely the epoch of which there is the least published record. The events of the first twenty years after the Conquest are even to-day but mistily known. They are repeated as first narrated by writer after writer without examination; or they are somewhat modified by a running commentary to meet *a priori* conclusions and to aid the party views of those who make a prosperous *état* out of printed opinions. Possibly many have honestly believed all they express. They found admitted authorities with a ready-made collection of facts, and they had only to follow in the beaten track. Even where the sceptical spirit was aroused it became crushed or dormant from its want of exercise. The collection of original documents, like any other collection, is a matter of slow, careful, and systematic labour. In no place is there a greater division of positive work. The accumulation of a mass of any material, say money, and then theorize upwards or downwards as you will, is an art of itself requiring special capacity. When the effort is a collection of National Archives you have to establish what is required, what is indispensably necessary, to know where to seek for it, to take means to obtain it, and to be careful not to pay twice over for the same commodity. The second stage is to assort all this matter, to classify it, to place it in such a form and to give it such reference that on necessity immediately it can be found. The third condition is to draw up a calendar of it, to describe it, and in short to make it available to the ordinary inquirer. One, therefore, who sees a collection of any kind brought to the hammer feels a twinge of pain as he thinks of the enthusiasm, the sustained effort, the frequent sacrifices which have gathered it only by slow degrees. Among the many monuments of Imperial London none is so striking, so impressive, as the reading-room and library of the

British Museum, offering to view one of the largest known printed collections of books and pamphlets, accessible to the poorest and humblest inhabitant of the realm ; admission to the room being only contingent on good manners and decent conduct. It is from this great centre that much of the impetus of thought and intelligence is given, and the sentiment established as a matter of national faith that in large Provincial centres, a collection of books is as essential to the well-being of the people to raise them from mental degradation, superstition, and extravagance of thought, as the air they breathe, and the food they take to strengthen and refresh their bodies. There is no point on which history so much repeats itself as in the exhibition of that charlatanism which urges itself forward without a scruple, without truth, without principle. And as a community, or more properly perhaps to speak, the teachers of that community, have the training and the knowledge to bring past examples of this nefarious success before the world, so is there the greater or less certainty of men being warned against the viper, seeking to secure its nest in the national bosom.

The Historical Society of Quebec is deserving of honourable notice by the publication of many important documents from time to time issued by its members. It was formed in 1824. Lord Dalhousie, then Governor-General, took a prominent part in its establishment, and presided at the first meeting held on the 6th January at the Chateau of St. Louis, when the society was organized. There is an Historical Society of Montreal ; its fortunes appear, however, to have somewhat waned. It never reached the distinguished position of that of Quebec, which, undoubtedly, has made many valuable contributions to our history. But the best well-wisher and friend of the latter must acknowledge that its operations have been fitful and uncertain, and of late unimportant.