

## Note on the Arrangement of Documents, &c.

THE technical arrangement and details of this volume are very similar in principle to those of Volume III. The material deals mainly with one theme, the Anglo-Russian *rapprochement*. The amount of detail varies in the different chapters, the selection being most rigid in those chapters for which considerable published material already exists in Parliamentary Papers, *i.e.*, the first chapter of the volume and that relating to Thibet.

Within the chapters and their sub-sections, the papers are placed in chronological order as in previous volumes; and, as before, chronological order means the date of despatch, whether to or from London, not the date of receipt. The latter is added wherever possible, and readers should be careful to note it.

Most of the documents are taken from the official series of Foreign Office papers in the Public Record Office. The classification of these papers for the period 1898–1905 was thus described in the note prefaced to Volumes I and II (p. ix) :

“They are classified mainly by country (F.O. France, etc.) and within countries by years. For each year the diplomatic documents are separated from the commercial and other classes. Within the diplomatic class there are volumes of outgoing and incoming despatches, outgoing and incoming telegrams, communications with the Foreign Ambassador (‘Domestic’) and with other Government Departments (‘Various’). Papers relating to certain subjects have been specially treated. Some have been placed together in a miscellaneous series (F.O. General), as in the case of the Hague Peace Conference. In other instances all papers relating to a certain geographical area have been placed together, as with African affairs (after 1899) and the affairs of Morocco. Correspondence with the British representative of Paris or elsewhere appears in these cases under F.O. Africa or F.O. Morocco. A third method was to separate the correspondence relating to a special aspect of affairs from the other papers of the country concerned, thus removing them from chronological sequence. This was the case with despatches on African affairs down to 1899, which appear in special series of F.O. France (Africa), F.O. Germany (Africa), etc.”

The Note prefaced to Volume III (pp. ix–x) described further the arrangement inaugurated at the beginning of 1906 :—

“A new system was inaugurated at the beginning of the year 1906. From that date all papers, irrespective of country, are first divided into certain general categories, ‘Political’ (the former ‘Diplomatic’), *Commercial*, *Consular*, *Treaty*, etc. The papers are, however, not removed from their original files, the contents of each file being treated as one document. The files of papers are classified within the general categories according to the country to which their subject most properly belongs. The volumes containing papers relating to any country are therefore in a sub-section of the main series, and these sub-sections are arranged in alphabetical order (*e.g.*, *Political*, *Abyssinia*, etc.). Previously the correspondence with, say, the British Ambassador at Paris was kept distinct from the communications of the French Ambassador in London, the latter being termed ‘Domestic.’ This distinction is now abolished, and all papers relating to a subject are placed together in one file or in a series of files. The historian finds many difficulties in this arrangement, as the files are not arranged in the volumes in chronological or alphabetical sequence. The Foreign Office

overcomes these difficulties by compiling a manuscript register of the contents, but this method cannot be used so satisfactorily by the historian. It is to be feared that the new arrangement makes it more difficult for the historian to be sure he has found all the papers relating to a given incident."

The Editors are informed that the system or arrangement started in 1906 will be continued for the remainder of the period down to the outbreak of the War; but at present this process of arrangement in bound volumes has only reached the year 1908.

The use of the Embassy archives to supplement the documents found in the Foreign Office series is possible after 1905 only in the case of Japan (to 1910) and Russia, and some of the Archives of the Embassy at St. Petersburg were damaged or destroyed during the disturbances at the end of the War; the papers therefore reached England in a defective State. They have nevertheless been found useful in supplying some points in connection with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (pp. 173-9) and in verifying the text of other documents. The other Embassies and Legations, as recorded in the note prefaced to Volume III (p. x), have not yet sent their later papers to England. It is practically impossible to consult these in a dozen different places, and this fact is a serious handicap to the Editors; they have often found valuable information in the Embassy Archives which was not available elsewhere. It is notable, however, that there are very few cases in this later period in which documents appearing in the "Confidential Print" have proved unobtainable in the original. This fact seems to show that the records are more exact and complete after 1906.

• The private collections available at the Foreign Office become more complete from the beginning of the year 1906. The private correspondence of Sir Edward (Lord) Grey contains papers of the highest value, and that of Sir Arthur Nicolson (Lord Carnock) increases in importance with each year.