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THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANADIAN  
PEOPLE.

AN HISTORICAL REVIEW.

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CHAPTER IV.

NATIVE LITERATURE.

LORD Durham wrote, over fifty years' ago, of the French Canadians: 'They are a people without a history and a literature.' He was very ignorant, assuredly, of the deep interest that attaches to the historic past of the first pioneers in Canada, and had he lived to the present day, he would have blotted out the first part of the statement. But he was right enough when he added that the French Canadians had, at that time, no literature of their own. During the two centuries and more that Canada remained a French Colony, books were neither read nor written; they were only to be seen in the educational establishments, or in a very few

private houses, in the later days of the colony.\* An intellectual torpor was the prevailing feature of the French régime. Only now and then do we meet in the history of those early times with the name of a man residing in the colony with some reputation for his literary or scientific attainments. The genial, chatty L'Escarbot has left us a pleasant volume of the early days of Acadie, when De Monts and De Poutrincourt were struggling to establish Port Royal. The works of the Jesuits Lafitau and Charlevoix are well known to all students of the historic past of Canada. The Marquis de la Galissonnière was the only man

\* The priests appear to have only encouraged books of devotion. La Hontan mentions an incident of a priest coming into his room and tearing up a book; but the library of that gay gentleman was hardly very select and proper.