

of culture among the functionaries of the French dominion. Parkman tells us that the physician Sarrazin, whose name still clings to the pitcher-plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*) was for years the only real medical man in Canada, and was chiefly dependent for his support on the miserable pittance of three hundred francs yearly, given him by the king. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose there was no cultivated society in Canada. The navigator Bougainville tells us, that, though education was so defective, the Canadians were naturally very intelligent, and their accent was as good as that of the Parisians. Another well-informed writer says 'there was a select little society in Quebec, which wants nothing to make it agreeable. In the salons of the wives of the Governor and Intendant, one finds circles as brilliant as in other countries. Science and the Fine Arts have their turn, and conversation does not flag. The Canadians breathe from their birth an air of liberty, which makes them very pleasant in the intercourse of life, and our language is nowhere more purely spoken.' But the people outside of the little coterie, of which this writer speaks so flatteringly, had no opportunities whatever of following the progress of new ideas in the parent state. What learning there was, could only be found among the priests, to whom we owe 'Les Relations des Jesuites,' among other less notable productions. The Roman Catholic Church, being everywhere a democracy, the humblest *habitant* might enter its ranks and aspire to its highest dignities. Consequently we find the pioneers of that Church, at the very outset, affording the Canadian an opportunity, irrespective of birth or wealth, of entering within its pale. But apart from this class, there was no inducement offered to Canadian intellect in those times.

The Conquest robbed the country of a large proportion of the best class of the Canadian *noblesse*, and many years elapsed before the people awoke

from their mental slumber. The press alone illustrated the literary capacity of the best intellects for very many years after the fall of Quebec. We have already read how many political writers of eminence were born with the endowment of the Canadian with political rights, which aroused him from his torpor and gave his mental faculties a new impulse. The only works, however, of national importance which issued from the press, from the Conquest to the Union of 1840, were Mr. Joseph Bouchette's topographical descriptions of British North America, which had to be published in England at a great expense; but these books, creditable as they were to the ability and industry of the author, and useful as they certainly were to the whole country, could never enter into general circulation. They must always remain, however, the most creditable specimens of works of that class ever published in any country. The first volume of poetry, written by a French Canadian, was published in 1830, by M. Michel Bibaud, who was also the editor of the 'Bibliothèque Canadienne,' and 'Le Magazin du Bas Canada,' periodicals very short lived, though somewhat promising.

From the year 1840, commenced a new era in French Canadian letters, as we can see by reference to the pages of several periodical publications, which were issued subsequently. 'Le Repertoire National,' published from 1848 to 1850, contained the first efforts of those writers who could fairly lay claim to be the pioneers of French Canadian Literature. This useful publication was followed by the 'Soirées Canadiennes,' and 'Le Foyer Canadien,' which also gave a new impulse to native talent, and those who wish to study the productions of the early days of French Canadian literature will find much interest and profit in the pages of these characteristic publications, as well as in the 'Revue Canadienne,' of these later times.