

The Charlottetown Herald.

NEW SERIES.

CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 1900.

Vol. XXIX, No. 29

Calendar for July, 1900.

MOON'S CHANGES.
First Quarter, 4th, 4h. 25m. p. m.
Full Moon, 12th, 5h. 33m. a. m.
Last Quarter, 19th, 9h. 43m. p. m.
New Moon, 26th, 5h. 54m. a. m.

| D | Day of Week. | Sun rises | Sun sets | Moon rises | High Water |
|----|--------------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Sunday | 4 23 | 7 48 | 10 3 | 0 06 |
| 2 | Monday | 5 21 | 8 48 | 10 27 | 1 35 |
| 3 | Tuesday | 6 18 | 9 48 | 11 18 | 2 15 |
| 4 | Wednesday | 7 14 | 10 48 | 12 5 | 2 55 |
| 5 | Thursday | 8 11 | 11 47 | 1 17 | 3 40 |
| 6 | Friday | 9 8 | 12 46 | 2 22 | 4 36 |
| 7 | Saturday | 10 5 | 1 45 | 3 26 | 5 32 |
| 8 | Sunday | 11 4 | 2 44 | 4 29 | 6 25 |
| 9 | Monday | 12 3 | 3 43 | 5 22 | 7 12 |
| 10 | Tuesday | 1 2 | 4 42 | 6 23 | 8 12 |
| 11 | Wednesday | 2 1 | 5 41 | 7 22 | 9 22 |
| 12 | Thursday | 3 0 | 6 40 | 8 23 | 10 35 |
| 13 | Friday | 3 59 | 7 39 | 9 20 | 11 47 |
| 14 | Saturday | 4 58 | 8 38 | 10 15 | 12 57 |
| 15 | Sunday | 5 57 | 9 37 | 11 11 | 0 33 |
| 16 | Monday | 6 56 | 10 36 | 12 11 | 1 11 |
| 17 | Tuesday | 7 55 | 11 35 | 1 14 | 1 50 |
| 18 | Wednesday | 8 54 | 12 34 | 2 10 | 2 30 |
| 19 | Thursday | 9 53 | 1 33 | 3 13 | 3 13 |
| 20 | Friday | 10 52 | 2 32 | 4 13 | 4 00 |
| 21 | Saturday | 11 51 | 3 31 | 5 14 | 4 54 |
| 22 | Sunday | 12 50 | 4 30 | 6 14 | 5 54 |
| 23 | Monday | 1 49 | 5 29 | 7 12 | 6 54 |
| 24 | Tuesday | 2 48 | 6 28 | 8 12 | 7 54 |
| 25 | Wednesday | 3 47 | 7 27 | 9 11 | 8 54 |
| 26 | Thursday | 4 46 | 8 26 | 10 11 | 9 54 |
| 27 | Friday | 5 45 | 9 25 | 11 11 | 10 54 |
| 28 | Saturday | 6 44 | 10 24 | 12 11 | 11 54 |
| 29 | Sunday | 7 43 | 11 23 | 1 11 | 12 54 |
| 30 | Monday | 8 42 | 12 22 | 2 11 | 0 54 |
| 31 | Tuesday | 9 41 | 1 21 | 3 11 | 1 54 |

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A Visit to Port Royal.

BY THE COUNTESS OF COURSON.

Few spots in the neighborhood of Paris are more picturesque than the little wooded valley that lies beyond Versailles, and where in bygone days stood the far-famed monastery of Port Royal des Champs. On a bright April day—one of those days that have a peculiar charm after the long dreary winter—we visited the solitary valley, rich in historical and literary reminiscences, and over which the past has cast a glamour that is not easily dispelled. Before describing what remains of the abbey, it will, perhaps, be well to remind our readers of the chief features of its history,—a history that lends a rather melancholy interest to its remains.

As far back as 1204 a convent of nuns was founded at Port Royal by a noble lady, Mathilde de Garlande. She wished to draw down God's blessing on her absent lord, Mathieu de Montmorency, who was taking part in the fourth Crusade; and the spot she selected for her foundation was, from its solitary position, well suited to become a home of penance and prayer.

The convent flourished, with varying fortunes, for nearly four hundred years; but toward the end of the sixteenth century its inmates, who were supposed to follow the rule of Cîteaux, had become worldly and dissipated. They came and went freely, regardless of their rule; wore silk and embroidered garments instead of their white robe; made use of perfumes and cosmetics, and presented the picture of a group of women of the world living together in comfort and even luxury.

Among the many abuses that had crept in among them one of the gravest was the extremely uncanonical election of a little girl of twelve to be their abbess. This child, whose baby hands wielded the crozier that in bygone times had been borne by many saintly and venerable women, was one of the twenty children of Antoine Arnauld, a lawyer and a politician, well known for his great talents and also for his intriguing spirit. Of his large family, ten children remained, and all his thoughts were bent upon settling them in life as advantageously as possible. His able manoeuvres brought about the election of his daughter Angélique as abbess of Port Royal, where many years later her widowed mother and five of her sisters also took the veil.

At the age of seventeen an important change came over the young abbess, who until then had borne her honors and responsibilities with the carelessness of a child. A monk named Eustache de St. Paul came to preach at Port Royal. He seems to have been a fervent and courageous man, for he boldly rebuked the nuns for their worldly spirit and habits. His words sank deeply into the earnest, impetuous soul of Angélique; the sense of her responsibility struck her with sudden force, and she resolved at whatever cost to re-establish religious discipline among her community.

The task was a difficult one. The young reformer had to contend with the opposition not only of the nuns, but also of her own father, who looked upon Port Royal as a convenient country-house where he and his family might come and go as they pleased. From her mother, on the contrary, the young abbess met with sympathy, and by degrees she succeeded in what appeared at first an almost hopeless undertaking. Under her powerful but gentle influence the community became more regular and edifying.

The Jesuit historian, Pere Rapin, who is the great opponent of the Jansenists, renders homage to the fervor of Mere Angélique's community at this early period of its history. "Both the abbess and the nuns," he tells us, "aspired to the most sublime perfection." Happy it would have been for the noble young abbess if her career had closed on this glorious episode of her stormy life!

It would be too long to relate how the famous Jansenist leader, St. Cyran, gradually acquired absolute power over both the abbess and her nuns. During the best and happiest years of her life, Angélique has been under the guidance of St. Francis de Sales, whose letters addressed to her are among the most beautiful he ever penned. Influenced by one so wise, so gentle and so wise, who knows to what heights of sanctity her soul might have reached! St. Cyran, on the contrary, under the cover of extreme austerity, involved her and her Sisters in the long, wearisome controversies to which Jansenism, that most subtle and dangerous of errors, gave rise during the seventeenth century.

Toward 1637 the celebrity of Port Royal was at its height. Around the picturesque monastery, whose religious discipline reigned in all its purity, had risen dwelling-houses, where great ladies like Madame de Longueville, the heroine of the Fronde, spent their time in prayer and penance. Scattered here and there in the valley and on the surrounding heights, were other houses where the solitaires,—or, as they were called, the "Mascoules"—of Port Royal resided. Thus a house that still exists, called the Granges, situated on the brow of the hill above the abbey, was the home of the famous Pascal, of Lemaître de Saicy, the translator of the Bible; of Nicole, Arnauld, and other men of undoubted genius. Here, too, Racine the poet spent part of his youth. Besides these famous writers and thinkers were many other solitaires, less celebrated, but whose individuality presents certain quaint traits of character. We are told of a Monsieur de la Riviere, once a prominent soldier, who "fasted continually and spent his days in the woods praying and meditating;" of a Monsieur de la Pettitiere, "more like a lion than a man," who in order to curb his pride became shoemaker to the community.

Unhappily, these men, whose talent and character were above the average, had embraced in a more or less degree the erroneous doctrines professed by the Jansenists on "Grace," of which St. Cyran was the apostle. Under the guise of austerity and humility, these opinions tended to replace love by fear in man's relations with his Creator. Violent controversies ensued between the Jansenists and their opponents. By degrees the affair assumed a political as well as a religious aspect; and King Louis XIV. declared himself the enemy of the new doctrine. At last, irritated by the obstinacy of the Jansenists, whose centre was Port Royal, the King caused the "heretic" to be dispersed, and the once flourishing community of nuns to disband.

These measures were justified by the tenacity with which the Jansenists clung to doctrines that were distinctly in opposition to those of the Church, and by the King's desire to put an end to a wearisome controversy. But nothing can excuse the ruthless destruction that followed. In the year 1709 the church and monastic buildings were deliberately pulled down; and, worse still, the dead bodies that filled the adjoining cemetery were torn from their graves and taken to the neighboring villages, where they were hastily buried. These repulsive and unnecessary proceedings, which, observes St. Simon, were carried out with the utmost indecency and brutality, might surely have been avoided.

It was on a bright April day that we rode on our bicycles from Paris to Port Royal,—past St. Cloud, with its ruined palace, once a favorite resort of the imperial court; past Versailles, with its somewhat desolate aspect of vanished splendor; up the wooded heights of Satory; then across a bare plain, with villages scattered far apart, and at the end of which the ground slopes downward and Port Royal appears.

The situation is an ideal one. Below us is a valley, in the midst of which once rose the famous Cistercian abbey. All around are thick woods, covering the adjoining slopes. Fine fruit-trees in full bloom stand out like huge bridal bouquets against the turquoise sky; while the pastures have the freshness of early spring, and carpets of cowslips and wood-anemones extend beneath the brushwood.

Leaving our bicycles at a farm-house, we descended by a steep pathway to the spot where the convent once stood. The soldiers of Louis XIV. did their work thoroughly; absolutely nothing

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remains of the vast monastic buildings, nor of the adjoining dwelling-houses where the Duchess de Longueville and her friends elected to live in retirement and penance. Only the outline of the church is visible, the foundations of the pillars having escaped destruction. Here and there is a bit of wall clothed with ivy. In the rear of the church, the entrance of Madame de Longueville's cellars indicates the site of her hotel; close by is a veritable "tostering water-tower," a contemporary, says tradition, of Mere Angélique.

In the centre of the ruins rises a small modern building, half museum, half oratory, erected by Monsieur Sloy, who seems to have inherited the Messieurs' admiration for all that concerns Port Royal. Within is a curious collection of portraits, books, papers, and other souvenirs of the famous abbey. Mere Angélique's dark, resolute face looks down upon us from the wall, by the side of her sister, Mere Agnes, with gentler but less characteristic features; and of young Jacqueline Pascal, sister to the writer, and herself one of the most attractive and sympathetic members of the Order. Then we find copies of the most famous Jansenist books; among others, "La Frequent Communion," in which are embodied in a practical form the doctrines that made the Jansenist teaching so dangerous; also letters, portions of the white habit of the nuns, the community clock, and relics that were formerly kept in the church.

Of these things the portraits are the most interesting. Men and women have curiously characteristic countenances, full of energy and resolution. We realize painfully as we gaze upon these gifted but misguided adherents of a most subtle heresy how much true power for good and genuine earnestness were here misdirected and misapplied; how the fatal taint of spiritual pride rendered the glorious intellectual gifts of these men and women a curse instead of a blessing to themselves and to others.

The country-house called the Granges, where Nicole, Arnauld, Pascal and young Racine lived and wrote, is still in much the same state as it was three hundred years ago. It is the private property of a gentleman who willingly allows visitors to enter. A steep pathway leads through the woods to the valley below; this is the identical pathway that was trod by the Messieurs in bygone days, when they went from the Granges to join in the religious functions of the abbey church.

About four miles from Port Royal is a little village called Magny les Hameaux, whose church is worth a visit. When, in 1709, the tombs of the abbey were broken open, many of the tombstones were brought to Magny, together with some of the bodies disinterred from the convent cemetery. These tombstones have been placed against the walls of the church; some of them have long and flowery Latin inscriptions; others are more impressive in their tones. Thus on the tomb of Arnauld d'Andilly, one of Mere Angélique's brothers, are the striking Latin words: Sub sole varitas, super solem veritas.—"Under the sun is vanity, above it is truth." The yellow and red marble altar of the little church comes from Port Royal; the white marble holy-water stoup is the one into which Mere Angélique, her nuns and their friends from the outside, the world-weary court-ladies, once dipped their fingers.

At Magny lies Hameaux still live three aged nuns, "les Soeurs de Ste. Marthe," the last survivors of a congregation of nuns that once served the chief hospitals of Paris. This congregation formerly professed the Jansenist doctrines that prevailed at Port Royal, and it is said that its members refused to accept the dogma of the Papal Infallibility in 1870. Be this as it may, the three survivors of the community now at Magny, live in peaceful terms with their pastor, the cure of the place; and if any lingering shadow of Jansenism still rests on these aged women, it is merely a vague feeling of affectionate loyalty toward those who once made Port Royal famous. They have nothing, poor souls! of the militant and argumentative spirit that marked Angélique Arnauld's naturally noble character.

As we ride on through green pastures and past hedgerows peeping into bloom, we muse on the fate of the celebrated convent whose fame once made the now lonely valley celebrated throughout France as a home of learning and piety. Of the errors that at different times have led the children of the Church astray, Jansenism, with its apparent respect for holy things, was one of the most delusive; and the remembrance of the souls whom its influence blighted and dwarfed in their heavenward flight overshadows even the brightness of that April day. Happily, human errors and weaknesses are judged by One who alone can rightly measure how far the error is voluntary and how far the weakness is culpable; and if He is infinite Justice, He is also infinite Love.

As we ponder over these things, we draw near to Versailles. A sharp descent through the woods of Bao brings us into the quiet streets of the silent city, once the centre whence the "Roi Soleil" radiated over France; then we take to the high-road. Soon Paris is reached; and amid the busy roar of its noisy streets, Port Royal and its lonely valley seem a far-off dream.—Ave Maria.

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