

The Rockwood Review.

THE MAGDALENE ISLANDS.

Situate in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, some fifty miles north of Prince Edward Island, and one hundred miles from the south-west point of Newfoundland, are an interesting group of small islands called the Magdalenes. They were first discovered by Jacques Cartier, and were conceded in 1662 by the French King to Sieur de Roublet, who used them as a fishing station. After the conquest of Canada, the islands became the property of Great Britain, and were given by the Crown to Admiral Coffin, whose grandson is to-day the proprietor of the greater part of them.

The Islands are six in number, four of them named Amherst, Grindstone, Allright and Coffin, are connected by sand-bars; Bryon and Entry are separated by channels from eight to nine miles wide. There are also four detached rocky islets, the principal of which, the Bird Rocks with its lighthouse, is well known to most travellers in that region.

The population consists chiefly of French speaking people, who in religion are Roman Catholics; a small minority—some 400 out of a population of between five and six thousand—are of English and Irish origin, and for the most part are members of the Anglican Church. The soil of the Islands is fertile, of a red colour resembling that of Prince Edward Island, but there are many wet swampy tracts, and wastes of sand which remain in their primeval state. At the present time lobster fishing and canning is the principal industry, but large numbers of mackerel and some cod are caught in the early spring and summer: agriculture therefore is to a great extent neglected, although some oats and hay are raised, as well as potatoes.

During the long winter months, communication is entirely cut off from the main shore, owing to the accumulation of ice which renders navigation impossible. A steamer

plies weekly between Pictou, N.S., and the principal islands, from the end of April to the middle of December; the rest of the year the only connection with the outside world is by the cable to Meat Cove, C. B. I paid a short visit to these Islands in the early summer of 1879, sailing down the River and Gulf from Quebec to Prince Edward Island, and joining the steamer St. Olaf—which formerly sailed between Aberdeen and the Shetland Islands—at Souris, a village at the eastern point of P. E. I.

We reached Grindstone Island, the largest of the Magdalenes, in the early morning of June 15th. The outlook was none of the best, as a thick drizzling rain was falling, and the weather was raw and chilly. There is but one wharf at all the islands at which the steamer is able to call alongside, at Grand Entry; at the other places of call, the passengers disembark in boats, and are rowed to the shore, at times a very unpleasant trip. I stayed at Grindstone Island two weeks, and at Coffin, or Grosse Isle as the French call it, and Byron Island the remaining week. During that time I made a study of the birds and plants of the islands, and only lost but three or four days on account of bad weather. I will state my experiences from day to day.

On the 15th June I reached Grindstone Island, and was met at the landing by the friends with whom I was to stay. The first day as stated was unfavorable, but I soon made the acquaintance of some of the birds—the robin, the bluejay, the junco, the Hudsonian titmouse, the redstart, the yellow bellied flycatcher and the fox sparrow. The former was very common, and had young that could leave the nest, the rest were probably just laying. Vegetation was backward, the only trees of any size are spruce and balsam fir, and very few of those twelve inches through the trunk. They grow close together and the woods are dense, in