

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

PORT ROYAL AS IT IS TO DAY

NOTES OF A VISIT TO THE VALLEY OF CHEVREUSE.

To some of the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN Port Royal may be a mere name, without significance or special meaning. Such readers will naturally leave this letter unread, and pass on in search of more congenial matter. To others, fewer it may be in number, the word will recall memories of the past, perhaps of college days, and will have many associations, not wholly pleasant perhaps, clustered around it. It is for these, many of whom are scattered up and down the country in retired manses, that I devote an evening to writing out some notes of a visit I made in the autumn of 1881 to the Valley of Chevreuse, and the sight of the once renowned church and abbey of Port-Royal-des-Champs—the name in full. It is situated about eighteen miles from Paris, in a retired valley, not far from Versailles. On leaving the railroad, the better to enjoy the scenery I went on foot, instead of taking a carriage, and *about* the better to place myself in imagination at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and in the company of those grand, pensive and learned men and devoted women, who gathered here to restore, as they thought, the Church to the purity it possessed in primitive times, but which had become sadly degraded, through the influence of the Jesuits, in morals, in learning and in piety. As we walk towards the once famous spot, let me recall a few of the leading events in the

HISTORY OF PORT ROYAL,

to put the reader *en rapport* with the story. A Cistercian Nunnery is said to have been founded here as early as 1233. But, passing on to the first years of the seventeenth century, we find the abbess of the nunnery to be Mother Angelica, sister of Antony Arnauld, a member of a distinguished family originally from Auvergne, and a man who had preferred a cell at Vincennes, to the gilded salons of Cardinal Richelieu. The story runs that a miserable Capuchin—a fugitive from his own congregation to become an apostate had stopped at Port Royal on his way to other lands, and preached so eloquently on the holiness of the "rule of St. Benoit," and on the "joys of religious blessedness," as to profoundly affect the young Marie Angelique—then not quite seventeen years of age. From that moment she resolved to reform and sanctify the convent; the Capuchin thereby "causing to spring up in others," as Racine puts it, "the virtues which he did not himself possess." About the same time Jansenius (Cornelle Jansen 1585-1638), a native of Holland, after studying at Utrecht and Louvain, happened to come to Paris, where he met M. Duvergier de Hauranne, (1581-1643) afterwards the Abbé St. Cyran, who took him in 1611 to his home in Bayonne, on the Bay of Biscay, and placed at the head of a newly founded college. While here the two studied together all ecclesiastical antiquities, the Councils and the Fathers, especially St. Augustine. In 1617 Jansen returned to Louvain, where he was made principal of the College of Ste. Pulcheria; and in 1630 he was appointed to a chair in the university, and six years after was made Bishop of Ypres. Although thus separated, Jansen and the Abbé St. Cyran, who had now come to reside at Port Royal, still corresponded, and laid the foundations of the sect which afterwards bore the name of Jansen, as to him it fell to formulate the doctrines for which it was known. For this purpose he is said to have read all the writings of St. Augustine ten times, and his treatise against the Pelagians thirty times. These doctrines were now spread through France, the Abbé St. Cyran and Antony Arnauld (1612-1694), the first official head of the Jansenists, who devoted himself to the study of theology, and was even received amongst the Doctors of the Sorbonne in 1643. These three men were the

FOUNDERS OF PORT ROYAL

in its complete form, and did much for the advancement of the human mind in literature, in morals and in grace. Arnauld was the great and learned Doctor of Theology, full of austerity and goodness; St. Cyran was the spiritual director of the house, who communicated his strong resisting temper to the souls of the "Solitaires;" and Jansenius, who, although living in another country, was the formulator of the dogmas which bound together the members of a society great in talent, of extensive learning, pure morals and

sincere piety, as it was understood at that time in the Church to which all the members belonged. The call to holiness of life which went forth from Port Royal was heard in every Catholic country; and soon began to collect in this retired valley, men of all ranks and of all professions, to seek here forgetfulness of the vanities and glory of the world. Hither came, for example, Antony Le-Maitre, the most brilliant member of the bar at that time, who had the courage to keep silent for twenty years; Nicole, the distinguished man of letters; the Duke of Liancourt, the grand Seigneur; De Sacy, Pascal and many others. Amongst the "religieuses" were enrolled such ladies as Marie Arnauld, Anna von Bourhan, the Duchess de Longueville, the friend of Boileau and Racine, and others of more plebeian origin. A school was erected for lay brethren, and here, in place of the loose morals of the Jesuits, was taught a system of pure ethics, and instead of the puerilities elsewhere inculcated, a more thorough method of instruction was adopted.

By the time I had arrived at the entrance to the enclosure which held the few remaining traces of the once renowned abbey, the shades of evening had begun to fall, and I had still a long distance to walk to catch the train for Paris. I was therefore reluctantly compelled to satisfy myself on this occasion with a distant view of the scene, which, in its utter loneliness, formed a striking contrast to the gay capital which I had left but a few hours before. Had I entered, I should have met the guardian of the ruins—now the property of the "Society of Saint Antoine"—a lean man with a long white beard, who has all the legends of the place at his finger ends; and in truth there is little else now than the legendary in this lonely spot. On asking where are the

RUINS OF PORT ROYAL

he would have pointed to the turret of a "keep" of the time of the wars, to a high pigeon-house with a pepper-box roof, and a venerable walnut tree which is said to date from the time of "Ces Messieurs," and to which tradition has given the name of the walnut tree of *Mère Angelique*. Approaching nearer, the visitor can make out traces of the choir and nave and the bases of some of the columns of the church, but of the abbey and of the cemetery absolutely nothing remains. On the site of the ancient choir is erected a small "chapelle expiatoire," on whose pediment stands a black cross, and on whose façade are inscribed some verses. Inside are preserved relics of the "solitaires" portraits of Mother Angelica, Antony Arnauld and his brother, Pascal and his sister, Jacqueline, with portraits and autographs of Nicole, St. Cyran and Dr. Hamon, and plans of the abbey. There are also two pictures, one of which represents the expulsion of the nuns by D'Argenson, and the other the exhuming of the bones from the cemetery to be carried to the neighbouring hamlets of Saint Lambert-les-Bois and Magny-les-Hameaux, where remains of the tombs can yet be seen. Near where once stood the church, in a grass field surrounded by a hedge, was the cemetery of the "retraités;" and at a corner of this field under a poplar tree, was buried Jean Racine, the author of the "Plaideurs," who came here to study those deep questions of "free will" and "grace," which had perplexed an Arnauld and exercised a Pascal. But the

WRATH OF THE CHURCH

attempts to reform her, and the hatred of the Jesuits at being unmasked, seconded by the troops of Louis XIV, are everywhere visible. The steadfastness of the "solitaires" and of the "religieuses" in the avowal of Jansenism had for its result the abolition and complete destruction of the cloister and all the buildings in 1709. Some of the inmates escaped and took refuge in foreign countries, while others were imprisoned in the Bastille. The king commanded that every trace of those who had accepted the teaching of Jansen should be effaced; "Let nothing remain" were his words. And yet, strange to say, of Port Royal more is to be seen to day than of Marly. The palace of the king has more completely disappeared than the church of the "religieuses." Of the latter a few traces are still visible, but of Marly not a vestige is to be found. A visit to this solitude where no movement or life is seen, is apt, at this season of the year especially, to induce a feeling of sadness, and to produce reflections of rather a sombre character. On my walk back to Paris I could not help thinking of the

STRANGE CHANGES

both in the case of nature, societies, and individuals

which time brings about. The Jesuits were certainly successful in dispersing the Port Royalists in the early years of the eighteenth century, but before the close of the century they themselves were expelled from France, and only a few months before the date of this visit I had seen the dispersion of such of them as had found their way back to Paris under various names, and the closing up of the churches and other buildings in which they were accustomed to instil their principles into the minds of the young. How could one refrain also from contrasting the quiet which now reigns all around, with the fierce theological contests between the Jansenists and Molinists (Jesuits) which once raged here, agitating the minds of men and dividing theologians into two hostile camps, echoes from which are occasionally to be heard in the literature of the present day. To some minds the falsity of the idea that happiness and holiness are only to be attained by seclusion from the world, will be so obvious as to excite pity for those who were and who still are, of a different opinion. To the "lève pour existence" of the "solitaires" of Port Royal, will be opposed in their estimation the "struggle for existence," which experience proves to be much better suited for awakening holy thoughts and prompting noble deeds. They will be ready to quote Keble, and say:

"We need not bid, for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky;
The trivial sound, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask."

Yes, man is a social animal; he was made for action, to mingle with his fellows, to fight his way onward and upward, daily becoming stronger and better and therefore happier. It is true, Pascal was a "solitaire;" but his "Provincial Letters" show that he was, at the same time, an advocate of progress and of pure morals, as were, indeed, all the prominent men amongst the Port Royalists. But this does not hold true in regard to many similar institutions whose so-called "ascetic morality" is found to be what Herbert Spencer designates "ascetic immorality." With what "infinite irony" has the author of the "Provincial Letters" exposed the arts by which the Jesuits of his day destroyed the foundation of religion and sapped the basis of morals. By a great thinker this book is declared to be one of the best worth reading in the whole range of literature. But I must stop. If any reader cannot pursue the subject, he will find abundance of interesting matter in Sainte-Beuve's "Port Royal," after which he may amuse himself by perusing Balzac's volume on the same subject. The "Provincial Letters" will then be in order. T. H.

Dresden, Germany, 30th January, 1883.

HOME MISSIONS IN MUSKOKA AND PARRY SOUND.—II.

As I had now entered on my new field of labour, I called into the houses on the roadside as I went along, making myself known, and telling the inmates of the time when, and the place where, divine service would be held the next Sabbath. These visits are made with the object of securing a good audience at the first service, which is often small, and are quite different from a missionary visit. I rarely take a seat, and never ask people to come to service, but take it for granted that they will be glad to come. At this my first station, Rye (named after Miss Rye), there is neither school house nor church; service is held in the house of one of our people, Mr. C. Wood, late of Elora. A public building is always preferable for the Sabbath services. As I have made the smallest details of my work a matter of prayerful consideration, I can humbly say that the Lord has prospered the work that He has given me to do, and I trust my motives will not be misunderstood if I describe with minuteness the order of service at a new place, which order I generally follow at each station. It is somewhat unusual, but I think it best for this work, as it enables the people of God who may attend the first service, and the missionary, to at once get acquainted with each other's aims and views.

Service at 10:30 a.m. I keep my watch as near sun time as possible, and make this known. I allow ten minutes for the difference in the clocks. This ten minutes I improve by reading a psalm to those who are present, sometimes saying a few words to the young. This prevents talking and whispering, which people are very apt to do, especially when the service is held in a private house. I begin the public