

the French side of the boundary. But the English authorities at Halifax, after long and astonishing forbearance, had begun to develop a scheme of their own; and the fleet which, on this April morning, excited such consternation among the watchers on Beauséjour, formed a part of it. Lord Cornwallis had decided that an English force established in Beaubassin would be the most effective check upon the influence of Beauséjour; and the vessels now at anchor off the mouth of the red and winding Missaguash, contained a little army of four hundred British troops, under command of Major Lawrence. This expedition had been sent out from Halifax with a commendable secrecy, but neither its approach nor its purpose could be kept hidden from the ever-alert Le Loutre. Since Beaubassin was on British soil, no armed opposition could be made to the landing of the British force; and the troops on Beauséjour could only gnaw their moustaches and gaze in angry silence. But Le Loutre was resolved that on the arrival of the British there should be no more Beaubassin. The villagers were not to remain in such bad company!

Pierre Lecorbeau was swift of foot. As he sped across the grey-green levels, at this season of the year spongy with rains, he glanced over his shoulder and saw the Abbé, with his companions, just quitting the log cabin which served as the quarters of Boishébert. The boy's brow took on a yet darker shadow. When he reached the top of the dyke that bordered the Missaguash, he paused an instant and gazed seaward. Pierre was eagerly French at heart, loving France, as he hated Le Loutre, with a fresh and young enthusiasm; and as his eyes rested on the crimson folds, the red, blue, and white crosses that streamed from the topmasts of the English ships, his eyes flashed with keen hostility. Then he vanished over the dyke, and was soon splashing through the muddy shallows of the ford. The water was fast deepening, and he thought to himself, "If Monsieur the Abbé hasten not, he will have to swim where I am walking but knee-deep!"

There was another stretch of marsh for Pierre to cross ere reaching the gentle and fruitful slopes on which the village was outspread. On the very edge of the village, half-way up a low hill jutting out into the Missaguash marsh, stood the cabin of Pierre's father amid its orchards. There was little work to do on the farm

at this season. The stock had all been tended, and the family were gathered in the kitchen when Pierre, breathless and gasping, burst in with his evil tidings.

Now in the household of Antoine Lecorbeau, and in Beaubassin generally, not less than among the garrison of Beauséjour, the coming of the English fleet had produced a commotion. But in the heart of Lecorbeau there was less anxiety than curiosity. This temperate and sagacious farmer had preserved an appearance of unimpeachable fidelity to the French, but in his inmost soul he appreciated the tolerance of the British rule, and longed to see it strengthened. If the visitors were coming to stay, as was rumoured to be the case, then, to Antoine Lecorbeau's thinking, the day was a lucky one for Beaubassin. He thought how he would snap his fingers at Le Loutre and his Micmacs. But he was beginning to exult too soon.

When Pierre told his story, and the family realized that their kindly home was doomed, the little dark kitchen, with its wooden ceiling, was filled with lamentations. Such of the children as were big enough to understand the calamity, wept aloud, and the littler ones cried from sympathy. Pierre's father for a moment appeared bowed down beneath the stroke, but the mother, a stout, dark, gentle-faced woman, suddenly stopped her sobs and cried out in a shrill voice, with her queer Breton accent:

"Antoine, Antoine, we will defy the wicked, cruel Abbé, and pray the English to protect us from him. Did not Father Xavier, just before he was sent away, tell us that the English were just, and that it was our duty to be faithful to them? How can we go out into this rough spring weather with no longer a roof to cover us?"

This appeal roused the Acadian. His shrewd sense and knowledge of those with whom he had to deal came at once to his aid.

"Nay, nay, mother!" said he, rising and passing his gnarled hand over his forehead, "it is even as Pierre has said. We must be the first to do the bidding of Monsieur the Abbé, and must seem to do it of our own accord. It will be hours yet ere the English be among us; and long ere that Le Loutre will have had time to work his will upon those who refuse to do his bidding. Do thou get the stuff together. This night we must sleep