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Pierre and Little Pierre.

BY A. B. DEMILLE.

At the head of the great surging Bay of Fundy, which rolls its tawny waves between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, lies the Tantramar Marsh. It runs inland for miles on the isthmus of Chignecto, and is protected by dikes along its sea front.

Tantramar has a history that goes back some two hundred years to the time when the first French settlers drove back the sea from the wide mud flats and made into rich meadows tracts that had once been covered by each returning tide. Two rivers wind tortuously through the marsh, the Aulac, a corruption of the French "Bau Lac," and the larger Tantramar. Low dikes run along each side. Twice every day the vast, turbid tides brim the rivers from bank to bank; twice every day only huge trenches of red mud show where the waters have been. In autumn and winter, when the storms sweep up Tantramar, and the waves thunder all along the shores as the tide comes in, it is well to know that the dikes are strong enough to guard the meadows from the hungry sea.

Pierre Lapreau, farmer, fisherman, and French Canadian, stood at the door of his house on the northern uplands and gazed out across the great marsh. It was autumn. The grass had grown dark under the first frost, all the woods were aflame with scarlet and gold, and the houses on the distant hills shone warm through the mellow sunlight.

Pierre's farm lay above the marsh. From his vantage ground, a fair scene was outspread before him. Opposite, the long ridge of upland ended in a round green hill, situated exactly at the head of the Bay of Fundy. It was Fort Beauséjour, old and dismantled now, where some of Pierre's ancestors had fought to stay the coming of the English. Further away, dim and hazy, the mud flats of Minudie and the lofty coast of Nova Scotia ran down the bay. Immediately in front, the Tantramar Marsh dotted with weather-stained barns, and stretching from the sunlit sea to the low, spruce-crowned hills which formed the backbone of the isthmus.

Pierre Lapreau owned fields on the upland, as well as large tracts of marsh, each of which had its barn, where, when the reaping was done, the fragrant hay was stored until it could be moved to safer quarters.

All Pierre's barns were in good condition except one, which had been shaken by storm after storm and never repaired. Any fierce wind might bring it down. Pierre thought of this as he stood at his door looking across at Tantramar. The long hill ranges loomed larger than usual; that was a bad sign. Then Pierre glanced down the bay, and there, above the sunny waves, a huge cloud bank smouldered up out of the sea. It was more than the familiar fog, which is always hanging somewhere about the Bay of Fundy. Fog looks dark in the distance, but it does not rise black and solid, with clear-cut edges and faint lightnings playing about its depths. A storm was coming.

Pierre turned and went into the house. It was a large, old-fashioned building. There was a sitting-room, used only upon special occasions, and a big kitchen, with heavy beams across the ceiling, and a cavernous chimney built up outside. Pierre's wife (known as "Mis's Pierre" by the English settlers of the countryside, and "Madame Lapreau" by the French), sat in front of the fire, cooking.

"There's a storm coming up the bay," said Pierre, in the French-Canadian patois, which he always used to his own people; "and I go to the South Marsh to know if all is well with the dikes and cattle. Also I must see to the fishing boat." The farmers of Tantramar combined shad fishing with their other work.

The South Marsh lay three miles away, where the Tantramar river entered the sea. Here the dike began, running from the mainland along the sea front to the mouth of the river, and then following its bank. Pierre had turned some cattle on the marsh. The old, shaky barn also stood there.

There is always a wind blowing over Tantramar; in summer from the south and west, and in winter from the bitter north, but forever sweeping the great marsh from end to end. So it was today, but, as Pierre left his house, he noticed that the wind had suddenly grown stronger, and the sinking sun had disappeared behind the vast black clouds. The air was alive with the breath of the storm.

Before Pierre had gone many steps he heard a small, imperious voice behind him.

"Father, where are you going? I will come, too!"

It was his youngest son, a sturdy lad of five years, called "Little Pierre" by all who knew the stolid little figure, with its dark eyes and hair.

The father turned and spoke in French.

"No, p'tit Pierre, you cannot come. I go away to the South Marsh. Be good and go into the house."

He kissed the child and hastened away.

Little Pierre looked after his father with tears in his eyes. Why couldn't he go, too, and see the wonderful South Marsh, where the big, white seagulls screamed as they wheeled about the fishing boats, and the big, white waves foamed in over the shoals and sometimes smote the dike itself? It was very hard, and, in a wilful mood, little Pierre stole out of the yard, past the glowing holly-hocks that bowed in the wind, past the tall, yellow sunflowers that watched him go down the road. It was straight and smooth, and the child made wonderful progress. He trudged on and on until he came to where the road dipped to the level of the marshes. The South Marsh was not far now. But the wind was roaring in with great force, the dark clouds covered the sky, and all the sunlight was gone, save a narrow streak of angry red low down on the horizon. His father was nowhere to be seen, and little Pierre began to feel lonely. He sat down on a stump by the roadside and gazed toward the South Marsh, which, with its battered old barn, was in plain sight, while, beyond, the surges of the bay crashed along the dikes as the tide came in. At last little Pierre saw some black forms moving across the marsh in the distance. With a joyful cry he jumped up and ran down the road.

Meanwhile Pierre had gathered together his cattle, and was driving them to the upland. It was a tedious task. The animals seemed full of fear at the howling wind and the distant tumult of the waves. They had been huddled together under the lee of the old barn, where the full force of the tempest was broken, and were loth to leave the shelter. But the master dare not risk exposing them to a night on the South Marsh when a fierce storm and tide wave were rolling up the bay. If any part of the dike went under there would be small chance for the animals in the darkness.

When his cattle were out of danger, Pierre returned to see how his fishing smack was weathering the gale. He walked along behind the dike until he came to the landing place where his boat was made fast. There he climbed to the top of the dike by some rough steps, and the force of the wind met him and brought him to his knees.

He was not prepared for the sight that met him. Night had come, but a faint glow still hung in the west. He could see only a wide expanse of furious waters. The surges rolled in over shoals and shook the very walls upon which he knelt. The spray flew up and drenched him to the skin. The tide was rising, and the thunder of the sea increased. Suddenly a deep sound rose above the clamor of the tempest. There was a tremor of the dike that was due to some greater cause than the blow of a surge.

The solitary watcher turned his head. Close beside him the dike was melting away. A mighty torrent poured into the gap. Another moment and a fishing boat drove through, bottom up. Pierre recognized it at once. It was his boat.

There was nothing to wait for now. He rose to his feet, steadied himself, and made a precarious way along the top of the dike to the upland where it took its beginning. The distance was not great, but it was a long journey in the growing darkness. Thus it happened that when Pierre reached the land he stood for a moment to recover his breath; and, as he stood, a feeble cry came faintly across the marsh.

"It is some sheep drowning out there," thought Pierre. "I am glad it is none of mine."

Again the cry, clearer and more pitiful than before.

"Ah, it is sad!" thought the tenderhearted farmer.

A pause; then the thin wall beat up a third time.

"It cannot be far away," murmured Pierre to himself.

"It is on the South Marsh." He walked out a few paces from the upland, and the water boiled about his knees. But the cry came in more sorrowful, more long drawn.

Pierre set his teeth, and moved in the direction of the sound.

"Perhaps some one will one day do the same for me," he said.

It was no easy task. The darkness was intense. The strong tide current raced across the broad marsh and seethed above his waist. But he struggled on, and the strange cry came more distinctly through the night.

At last a sudden break in the force of wind and water, and a creaking of loosened boards, told him that he was behind the old barn. The tide bawled loudly about its sides, for it was in line with the break in the dike. Then the cry arose close at hand. It came from within, and made Pierre's heart beat fast.

"It is a child," he muttered, and thought of his own Little Pierre, safe and warm in bed at the distant farmhouse.

The door of the old barn faced seaward and Pierre had to feel his way round to gain entrance. The water was surging high above the floor. But there was no other

sound. Pierre listened for a moment, then called out. Instantly a joyful little voice replied.

And in one corner, above the water upon a pile of hay, was little Pierre.

In the morning Pierre, with little Pierre in his arms and Mis's Pierre by his side, looked down from the farmhouse to the South Marsh, where shallow, gleaming pools were left by the ebb tide to show the ravage of the night.

But the old barn was gone.—The Independent.

Whitewashing For God.

There was one righteous man in Ortonville. There may have been more. But of this one we are certain. At first sight you would perhaps be surprised when he was pointed out to you as "the best man in town." But the town was small, and really, when you knew him, you would say, "Ah, well, even if he is the best, there is plenty of room left for the others to measure up." For Miles Cornish was a giant—every way. It is of his spiritual size we write.

Here, then, is his portrait—the portrait of the outer man: Tall, thin, sprightly; light hair, blue eyes, teeth to make a dentist smile—or frown; firm, pleasant lips, voice so merry you smiled, however commonplace his words.

As for his spiritual portrait, it has never been taken—on earth. Snapshots, it has been true, have been taken. You can not get a good picture of a giant with a small, cracked camera. Human cameras are very small and imperfect. But here is a snapshot:

Dressed in white overalls, splashed from head to foot with calcimine, singing as he went, Miles swung down the village street. He had been standing all day, his whitewash brush jollily flap-flopping on walls and ceilings. He was tired, for he had worked through his noon hour and past the "quitting time." No one had asked him to do this. But he had heard that a man with a sick wife was to move into the house where he was at work, that the small hotel was comfortable, and the sick woman in need of the quiet of her own room. Ordinarily, the work would have been a day and a half. Miles' employer was in no hurry, but the workman worked from five in the morning to eight at night, finished the job, stopped at the hotel to tell the sick woman's husband that the house was ready for them, and to ask, since he—Miles—was in one sense a neighbor, if he could help them in any way. The pay for the extra time of the day's work, the whitewasher dropped into the hand of an old man who was shuffling along the road.

"What, Miles? No, no, boy. You work hard for your money. See, I have a little left from what you gave me before."

"That's all right, grandfather. That's some extra money. That'll do to go on account of the days when you worked all day and I was too little to do more than eat the food that cost so dear. We must even things up in this world."

Miles hurried on.

"Bless the lad," muttered the old man. "He's queer, but he's got the soul of a white angel. Anybody'd think I was really his granddad. Now who ever heard of a young man evenin' things up that way? Most young fellows think the world owes them a livin'. Bless the lad! If I get to heaven it'll be because he made the way light for me, and—if they'll let me—I'll speak a good word for him. But maybe—maybe they know him better'n I do. Bless the lad!"

"The lad," already forgetting what he had done, was hurrying on. His was the kind of haste that has no selfishness about it. It is the haste born of freedom from care; light-heartedness and readiness for the next thing—rest or work or prayer.

At the door of a cottage a girl of fifteen was standing. She had been crying. At the sight of Miles walking toward her, her face brightened. She did not know him very well. She only knew that he was "a good man." To have a good man pass near is enough to make any woman's face brighter.

"Good evening, Miss Jennie. How is the mother getting on?" Miles' sharp eyes had seen the tear-flush on the girl's face, and he stopped.

"She is coming home from the hospital in the morning."

"Oh, that is good! Home is a good place."

The girl's lips trembled. "This isn't a good place for mother."

"Why, child?" She was indeed a child before this man, who stood six feet two in his stockings.

"It's so dingy and dirty. How can I clean it, when I work all day? If father finds me cleaning at night, he beats me. I don't know why."

Miles Cornish stood still. He was thinking. These were the words that were passing through his mind: