

THE DESERTED FARM.

A TRAGIC STORY.

INTRODUCTION.

It was my regular habit, while I resided in Montreal, Canada East, to spend six or eight weeks of every summer in travelling in Canada, or in the United States. I had in this way, visited the greater portion of the Upper Province, Niagara Falls, Saratoga Springs, the City of New York, Philadelphia, and the capital of Washington; and, on no occasion, had penetrated into the Far West, until I reached Kansas.

One summer I resolved to change my route, and instead of going westward I determined to make a tour through the eastern districts of Lower Canada, where the French Canadian inhabitants still retain the peculiar characteristics of their Norman ancestors.

With this object in view, I travelled along the southern shore of the St. Lawrence until I reached the little village of St. Claude, whereat I resolved to sojourn for three or four weeks.

St. Claude consists of one long street of wooden cottages. There is the usual wheelwright's and blacksmith's, and carpenter's shop, and a general store. A short distance from the main street stands the little toylike, white-washed, red-roofed Roman Catholic church, near which is the residence of Monsieur le Cure—the largest and neatest cottage in the village.

The residents of St. Claude (like those of Lower Canada generally) are certainly a primitive people. With the exception of M. le Cure, scarcely a dozen among them—and they number some four hundred—have ever journeyed fifty miles from their homes.

The villagers all dress alike in the ancient costume of Normandy. The young women and girls, however, displayed their abundant ebony tresses, uncovered by cap or bonnet, and being very neatly arranged, they present a very attractive appearance.

As a rule, these people are in a state of perfect ignorance, not one in fifty being able to read or write, or caring to acquire the knowledge. They are, in fact, well satisfied to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers—chiefly to make their own garments, to cultivate their small tenures in the old-fashioned style, and to live and die in their native village.

I did not find it an easy matter to procure lodgings in St. Claude; there is no hotel, and most of the cottages contain but two rooms. However, after much difficulty, I obtained apartments at a farm-house of the superior class, occupied by one Pierre Junot, his wife, and family.

On the fourth day of my sojourn at the farm-house, I strolled away towards Cape St. Anne; and having clambered to the summit of the lofty cliff which overhangs the river, stood a long while gazing around me at the fine and majestic scenery I was enabled to survey from the eminence I had gained.

Long I stood watching the effects of light and shadow upon the water, where not a vessel could be seen, save, perchance, some ice-bound wreck upon the rocky shore, and where the country in the rear, now green and fertile, and rejoicing in the beauty of summer, would be shrouded beneath a pall of glittering snow, from amidst which the trees, denuded of their now brilliant foliage, would rise like so many spectral objects scattered over the drear landscape.

At length, I turned aside, when my attention was arrested by what appeared to me to be a ruined and deserted farm-house of a description very far superior to any at present existing in this part of the province.

It stood in a deep valley, a mile or more distant. Several outhouses were seemingly attached to it, and it was surrounded by large fields and pasture grounds; but, so far as I could perceive, the place presented a singular aspect of gloom. Not a human being, nor even a solitary animal of any description, was to be discerned from the eminence upon which I stood, and which commanded a perfect view of the entire estate. Altogether, the place presented a strange and startling contrast to the generally bright and smiling summer landscape. Such a sight would have been remarkable in any part of the world, but it was especially singular in a comparatively new country, in which ruins do not form one of the attractions in the eyes of travellers and strangers, and in which, as yet, nothing has been left to decay.

I looked at my watch. It was yet early in the day, and I resolved to descend into the valley, and discover whether the farm was, in reality, the desolate spot it appeared to be viewed from a distance.

As I drew near the house, the absence of any trodden pathway seemed to confirm the opinion I had formed while gazing upon the spot from the summit of the cliff. Evidently there had once existed a tolerably broad road, leading, apparently, from the valley to the village, and several wide footpaths crossed and recrossed each other; but all had been long disused.

I turned the angle of a copse, the trees of which were surrounded with undergrowth, and entwined by parasites, and came into full view of the house. It was a large, roomy structure, which might have served, in the earlier days of the province, for the country seat of a nobleman. Vestiges of carving and other ornamentation were still visible over the door and windows. The palings surrounding the garden had rusted and fallen; the paths and flower beds were overgrown with grass and weeds; the roof of the house and the chimneys had fallen in; the window frames and glass were shattered to atoms, not a single entire pane of glass remaining; the whole front of the house was blackened by age, and overrun with fungi, and every surrounding object presented a sad aspect of ruin and desolation. The outhouses, barns, &c., were in a similar state of dilapidation; the large kitchen garden and orchard in the rear of the dwelling, and the large fields and pasture grounds, had evidently been uncultivated for many years, and had become a mass of wilderness; even the neighbouring woods appeared as though they had long been left to solitude, shunned both by man and beast.

My curiosity induced me to enter the garden—the gate of which lay deeply embedded in the soil—and peer into the house through the windows or the doorway, the door itself hanging half open on one rusty hinge.

I would indeed have entered the house, but the passage was strewn with the debris that had fallen from the ceiling, and had

blocked up the parlour doors on either side, and I saw that the staircase was broken, and the stairs were in such a rotten condition that they were unsafe, if not impassable. The walls, like the outside of the house, were overgrown with fungi, and pools of water, which had dripped from the broken roof, were visible on the floor. A sickly, mouldy, death-like smell prevailed the place, and I was glad to turn away and breathe the fresh air, after having stood in the passage for half a minute. As I passed the open apertures which had once been windows, I looked in through one of them, and saw that the room was large, and that the walls and ceilings were in a similar condition to those of the passage. What, however, struck me with amazement, was the discovery that the abundant, and apparently once handsome and costly, furniture of the apartment still remained within it; the chairs and tables, the large mirror over the mantelpiece, the sideboard loaded with china ornaments, and the pictures in gilded frames on the wall—rare things to be met with, even at the present day, in this remote portion of the province—remained as they had been placed when the house was tenanted; but were covered with dust and dirt, and blackened by damp and age.

On my return through the front garden, I remarked, with surprise, a large, almost circular spot in the centre, which was perfectly denuded of grass, or vegetation of any description; the soil having, apparently, been calcined by the action of fire, and which presented a strange and startling contrast to the luxuriant, though rank, vegetation by which it was surrounded.

On again consulting my watch, I found that I should barely have time to retrace my steps to my lodgings before the dinner hour; and, to tell the truth, I was not sorry to get away from the singular spot into which I had penetrated. I hastened, therefore, to climb the steep hill which led to the summit of the cliff and the road to St. Claude.

As I passed through the valley on my return, I did not help remarking the strange absence of animal life. Not a hare, rabbit, squirrel, or weasel—though these creatures abounded in the neighborhood—crossed my path. I did not hear the song or chirrup of a bird, nor even the buzz of an insect. The only audible sound was the whispering of the lofty pines and cedars; and to my excited fancy, there was something unearthly in the sound, heard amid the strange solitude, as though evil spirits were whispering in the upper air.

The utter loneliness in which I found myself weighed upon my spirits, and it was with a feeling of positive relief that I was once more clear of the valley, and on the summit of the cape; then turning about, and gazing again for a minute at the deserted farm, I made the best of my way homewards.

On my arrival there, I found that I was late, and that old Junot, and his wife and elder children, were—with the French Canadian politeness—waiting dinner; although the younger children were already seated at their own little table, busily occupied in discussing their *potage*.

I apologized for my tardiness, and expressed my regret that they had waited for me, and in five minutes we were all seated around the table, which was spread with an abundant and wholesome, though humble, meal.

"Monsieur must be fatigued. He has walked far," said the motherly Madame Junot.

"Yes, madame," I replied. "I rambled a considerable distance beyond the Cape. Nevertheless, the day is fine, the walk was pleasant, and I am not at all fatigued." And then, being curious to learn the history of the deserted farm, I related my adventure.

Had a bombshell fallen through the roof of the peaceful cottage, the listeners could scarcely have appeared more disconcerted. Pierre Junot and his wife dropped their knives and forks, and raised their eyes as if in appeal to heaven. The elder son and daughter almost started from their chairs, and even the younger children looked amazed.

At length Madame found utterance.

"You have truly, then, visited the accursed farm!" she exclaimed. "Yet what mystery that you have returned safe, never should I have pardoned myself had any evil befallen you. It would have been my fault, I should have warned you. I should have warned you. I should have told you to avoid the much dreaded spot. You are a stranger, and Providence has protected you; say, then, you will not go thither again."

I hesitated to make any promise, however, and requested my worthy hostess to give me the history of the farm and its former inhabitants, and to explain to me by what means it became forsaken, and reduced to its present ruinous and desolate condition.

Pierre and his wife and his son and daughter, however, alike hesitated to gratify my curiosity. In fact, to a certain degree, they professed ignorance.

"There are many stories," said Madame. "We do not speak of it. It is regarded as unlucky to allude to the subject. We avoid the spot which has for many years been accursed. Yet stay," she added, "if Monsieur is really curious to learn the history of the odious place, the cure will no doubt be willing to gratify his desire. He is secure from the machinations of evil spirits."

With this I was content, since a subsequent endeavour to obtain the information I sought from the eldest son of my host and hostess proved to be a complete failure. The young man evidently did not like to talk on the subject.

My curiosity was all the more excited in consequence of this strange reticence on the part of my host and his family, and I resolved, if possible, to solve the mystery from the lips of the cure, whose acquaintance, however, I had not yet made.

Monsieur Dubois, cure of the parish of St. Claude, was a short, stout, fresh-coloured man, of about sixty years of age. For twenty-five years he had officiated as cure of the parish. He was a cheerful, kind-hearted, charitable man, indefatigable in the performance of what he considered to be his duty, and beloved as well as revered by the simple-minded, honest people with whom his lot was cast, who looked up to him not only as their spiritual pastor, but also as their adviser in all temporal difficulties.

Hitherto I had merely bowed in return to M. Dubois's polite salutation, as he passed the house at which I lodged one morning while I was strolling in the garden. I made up my mind, however, to attend mass at the

little parish church the next Sabbath, thinking that the most likely way to secure the friendship of the good father, and perhaps procure an invitation to visit his cottage, especially as I had been informed that he was always glad to receive the visits of the few strangers who came to St. Claude, and to hear the news from the outer world, from which he, good man, had been so long secluded.

The next Sunday, accordingly, I made appearance in the church, and was politely accommodated with a seat near the altar, although the edifice was thronged to such a degree that many of the worshippers could not find standing room, and were compelled to wait outside the church doors. After service, and when the good priest had heaped blessings on the children of his parishioners, he perceived me, and stepping forward, cordially welcomed me to St. Claude.

"We seldom see strangers," said he. "A strange is a rarity in our remote village, and therefore we ought to welcome them all the more gladly when they do us the honour of visiting us. Does Monsieur intend to remain long at St. Claude?"

"Three or four weeks," I replied.

"Then," said he, "we must become friends. I shall be happy to see you at my humble dwelling; and as your time is limited, the sooner we become friends the better. Will you do me the honour to dine with me to-morrow?"

This was just the sort of invitation I had hoped for, and, of course, I gladly accepted it.

"I shall regard it as an honour on my part to make acquaintance of Monsieur le Cure," said I; and with this we wished each other good day.

The next day, at four o'clock in the afternoon I tapped at the door of the cure's cottage, and was admitted by his housekeeper, who conducted me to the dining-room, where I found the good father apparently anxiously awaiting my appearance.

CHAPTER I.

BETROTHAL AND THE ELOPEMENT.

M. Dubois's household consisted of himself, an aged female, his housekeeper, and a little girl of ten years of age; the former the widow, and the latter the orphan daughter of a fisherman of the village, who had perished in the exercise of their perilous occupation, to whom the good priest had given a comfortable and happy home.

We sat down together to a plain but appetizing repast, after which we adjourned to a little summer-house in the garden, whither the housekeeper brought a bottle of excellent wine.

"Come, fill your glass. You will find the wine of the best quality, though I never indulge in it save when I have visitors."

After a brief conversation on various topics, I ventured to introduce the subject which chiefly occupied my thoughts.

"Ah! the accursed farm!" exclaimed my host. "So, then, you have already visited the spot? You would learn its history? Ah, my friend! 'tis a sad and painful story. Still, if you care to listen, I will relate it to you. Come, let us go in-doors. It is growing dark and the air is always chilly after sunset, at St. Claude. We shall find a fire in my study. Gertrude will bring us another bottle of wine, and I will tell the story."

In the course of a few minutes we were seated by the fire in the good cure's cosy little study. We both replenished our glasses, and M. le Cure, having settled himself comfortably in his easy chair, proceeded with the narrative of the "accursed farm."

"Nearly a century has elapsed," commenced M. le Cure, "though already the province has passed from the possession of France to that of Great Britain, since Antoine Desjarniers, and his wife, Lisette, immigrated into Canada from their native Normandy."

"Antoine Desjarniers was of a class superior to the ordinary emigrants from France. He was, in fact, a small landowner, and when he had sold his farm and stock in Normandy, he found himself in possession of a considerable capital wherewith to commence operations in the new country of his adoption."

"This gave him a vast advantage over his fellow emigrants. He not only purchased a much larger tract of land than they, with their more limited means, were able to secure to themselves; and applied himself abundantly with cattle and sheep, and every variety of necessary agricultural implements; but he was likewise looked up to with respect by his less fortunate countrymen. And well, according to all accounts, was he worthy of the respect and regard voluntarily accorded to him. He, and his fair young wife, to whom he had been wedded only a few weeks before he quitted France, were kind and generous to the sick and aged; were always ready to extend a helping hand to the poor and needy; and were prepared at all times to take the lead in every movement that seemed calculated to tend to the welfare and happiness of the little community."

"They prospered, as the kind and good deserve to prosper; and within ten years from the date of his settlement at St. Claude, Antoine Desjarniers created a large and commodious dwelling, with barns and outhouses adjoining; and imported furniture, and pictures, and various costly ornaments from France, which caused his house to be regarded as the wonder of the surrounding country, and as a fitting residence for the proudest and wealthiest seigneur in the province."

"Alas! house and furniture, outhouses and farm, have been alike, for many, many years, neglected and deserted, and left to ruin and decay."

"About twelve months after the arrival of Antoine and his wife in their adopted country, their mutual happiness was increased by the birth of a son and heir, who was named Felix, after his maternal grandfather. Felix grew up to become a fine, handsome boy, alike the delight and pride of dotting parents, who now only craved for a daughter to crown their felicity. This craving, however, Providence, doubtless for wise reasons, saw fit not to gratify. At length they resolved, if possible, to adopt a little girl as their own; but this they found no such easy matter as they had anticipated. Although the community consisted chiefly of poor farmers and fishermen, there was not one father or mother among them who was willing to part with any one of their own little daughters, even in favour of the Desjarniers, much as they were loved and respected. There were none so poor as to find the cost of supporting a family a burden to them. On the contrary, in that young and thriving community, children were re-

garded as a source of wealth, and the larger a man's family, the greater he accounted his riches. The poor fishermen and farmers feared lest a daughter adopted by the wealthy Desjarniers should become proud, and forgetful, or neglectful, of the authors of her being."

"There was one sweet little girl, who bade fair to grow up the belle of the village, upon whom, especially, Madame Desjarniers looked with a feeling of envy that she could not claim the child as her own. This girl's name was Louise Legris. She was the only child of a widower—Pierre Legris, who was one of the poorest fishermen in St. Claude; but not for ten times the wealth of the Desjarniers, twice told, would he have parted with his little ewe-lamb, his only earthly treasure, for whose sake he toiled night and day, and often went forth to sea in times of storm and danger that kept his brother fishermen at home in their snug cabins, that he might increase his store, and provide a dowry for his darling against the time when she would arrive at a marriageable age."

"Alas! poor Pierre Legris dared the elements once too often. His little bark was caught in a heavy gale in the estuary of the St. Lawrence, and neither he nor his little vessel were seen or heard of more. Poor little Louise was left an orphan at nine years of age—an orphan, without near relations, but not friendless, for there was not a family in the village or parish of St. Claude that would not have gladly sheltered the poor little child, and adopted her as one of their own."

"Now, however, there was no obstacle in the way of the gratification of Madame Desjarniers' desire. Willing as they were to adopt the little orphan themselves, the fathers and mothers of the village perceived that they would be standing in the way of the child's best interests should they put in a claim in opposition to the wishes of her wealthier and kind-hearted neighbor. Most of them already had daughters of their own; Madame Desjarniers had none; and, therefore, with the general approbation of the community, the little Louise Legris became the adopted daughter of the wealthy farmer and his wife."

"Felix Desjarniers had at this period just completed his twelfth year. He was a noble, manly boy, with dark eyes and hair, and a fine open expression of countenance. The little Louise was just three years his junior—a golden-haired, blue-eyed child, with pretty, delicate features, a graceful form, and an expression of countenance in which the archedness of girlhood was mingled with a sweet pensiveness rarely seen in one so youthful."

"The good, simple villagers used to declare that she was the very image of the Madonna which stood in the niche about the church porch."

"I can only say," said the worthy priest, in parenthesis, with a smile, "that the image of the Madonna which adorned the village church must have been very much handsomer than the present one, or the good folk must have sadly maligned the child."

"It was, moreover, a common remark that no two children could have been found better suited to hold the relative positions of brother and sister than were Felix and Louise, who soon came to love each other as dearly as a real brother and sister could have loved. Happy had it been had this brotherly and sisterly love never been disturbed by a live more passionate, and still more tender. Happy, perhaps, had it been if M. and Madame Desjarniers had remained content with the one child whom heaven had bestowed upon them, and not craved so longingly after a daughter, whom Providence had seen fit to withhold from them. Oftentimes, alas! the boon which we poor, short-sighted mortals most earnestly crave, proves to be the fertile source of our future greatest affliction!"

"To proceed, however, with my story."

"Years passed away, and Felix and Louise—who had assumed the surname of her foster parents—were already on the verge of man and womanhood,—the one nineteen, the other sixteen, years of age, and were universally acknowledged to be the handsomest youthful pair in the parish of St. Claude. Both had been well educated for this position—Felix at the college at Quebec, and Louise at a school at Trois Rivieres; and both had returned home, for good. About a twelvemonth after their return, a great change had taken place in their feelings towards each other. They no longer appeared as brother and sister, but regarded each other with a stronger and more tender affection. In fact, they had secretly become betrothed to each other, and looked forward to the day when they should become man and wife. Nor were Monsieur and Madame Desjarniers blind to the change that had taken place in their children's sentiments; and though they were ignorant of the fact of their secret betrothal, they were far from being averse to their future union. The fair Louise had been to them all that a daughter could possibly have been; nor could they have loved a daughter of their own more dearly. They rejoiced, therefore, at the thought that Louise's marriage would not separate them, but that the youthful couple would still continue to live with them at the farm-house, until death should remove them to a happier world, where they would await an eternal reunion with their beloved children."

"Monsieur and Madame Desjarniers had continued to prosper, and their wealth had increased to such a degree, that there were few few in the province who were possessed of greater riches; though M. Desjarniers assumed no uppish airs, but still continued to live the simple, quiet life of a humble farmer. Nothing, meanwhile, had occurred to disturb the even tenor of their way; and it appeared as if heaven had exempted them from the ordinary sorrows and troubles which afflict poor mortals in almost every condition of life. It had been at length arranged that the marriage of Felix and Louise should take place when the former had completed his twenty-first year, and when Louise would, consequently, be eighteen years of age; and a public betrothal, followed by a grand *fete* given to all the villagers by M. Desjarniers, soon afterwards took place. Felix would have been better pleased had the wedding-day been fixed at an earlier period; and perhaps Louise was secretly on her lover's side. Both, however, were content to abide by the wishes of their parents."

"Everything, in fact, seemed to go smoothly with the Desjarniers—aged and youthful; yet a terrible calamity was swiftly approaching, which would shatter all their dearest hopes, and blight their happiness for ever. But I must not anticipate my story. It lacked but five months to the day appointed for the wedding of the youthful couple when M. Desjarniers came back from Nova Scotia, whither he had gone to purchase cattle. He had made a large purchase; and

having arranged for the reception of the cattle on his farm, he was about to return to Nova Scotia in order to bring them home, when Felix, who probably felt the time wearisome as the day of his marriage drew near, and wished the intervening space to pass over as speedily as possible, expressed his earnest desire to proceed to Nova Scotia in his father's place. It was expected that it would occupy four months to complete the journey to and fro, and that would bring his wedding day close at hand.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Geronimo, the Train Robber.

"O! all the smooth and slippery outlaws now loose and enjoying perfect freedom, the smoothest and slipperiest is Geronimo, the train robber of Arizona and Mexico," said A. A. Herring, the mining man, of Castle Dome, Ari. "I do not refer to the wily Apache chief, who, a short time ago, led in so many depredations on the frontier, but to the white namesake of his, who, if anything, possesses more cunning."

"Not much seems to be known of Geronimo in many Pacific Coast States and Territories outside of Arizona and the mountainous region to the south. He flies from one side of the Mexican line to the other in a few hours, and is as hard to get sight of as a will-o'-the-wisp. He goes into the most civilized towns of the frontier whenever he wants to, and nobody seems to have the nerve to tackle him."

"Geronimo was connected with two or three of the heaviest robberies on the Atchison, Topka and Santa Fe road a year or so ago. He lent a hand in the latest hold-up on the Southern Pacific. No detectives are after him, or if they are they make no headway in capturing him. He seems to have the right to go anywhere unmolested."

"His finances are considerably improved by his robberies of Wells, Fargo & Co. Mine owners, too, caught out with well-filled pockets, as well as numerous travellers, have paid tribute to him. Mexican and American cattle and horse owners have suffered. These depredations have been carried on for three and possibly for five years. A very round sum must have gone into Geronimo's exchequer in consequence. People most intimate with the circumstances of his plundering figure his gains at from \$100,000 to \$200,000. Perhaps not less than twenty men have been killed also, yet he has been regarded as a myth by many who have only heard about him in a cursory way."

"I assure you he is about the liveliest blood, muscle and bone myth, however, that there is a-going. There are no flies on him, and evidently it is a good man who will get him—a second Bob Garland or somebody of that sort. He knows the mountains as well as Billy the Kid ever did and better than any other outlaw now living. He came to Tombstone first about three years ago and went under the name of White."

"He stayed for a short time around the gambling houses. He never was known to engage in honest labor. He was a fair gambler, though he never played for big stakes. He seemed to play for pastime more than anything else. In a short time he disappeared and went to Clifton. Then he began his open career of crime. His last hauls were on the Atchison and Southern Pacific roads, where, it is believed, he got not less than \$20,000 each time. Then he went to Mexico and was captured by the regular troops while driving away some horses. But the Sonora jails were not strong enough to hold him, and he is now back in Arizona. He often visits Tombstone, and a short time ago was seen playing billiards in the Comet saloon there."

"He has no headquarters, and his devices to elude pursuers are always successful. Nothing is known of his presence till the day after he has left a place, and there is no doubt that those who know where he is keep still about it, for fear of death at his hands. His companion is a renegade Mexican, named Federico. It has been said that Geronimo is a Mexican, but this is a mistake. He is white, or very nearly so."

"Geronimo is a dead shot, and officers or anybody else are not in a hurry to try their skill against him. Some stiff rewards have been offered by the railroad and express companies for him, and private parties have also offered bonuses for him."

"The Governors of Arizona and Sonora have offered something like \$3,000 each. There is money in his scalp, if it can be got out to get it is the trouble."

A RIGHT KIND OF BOY.

The Young Canadian Who Speaks of His Office as "We."

Don't laugh at the boy who magnifies his place. You may see him coming from the post office with big bundle of his employer's letters, which he displays with as much pride as if they were his own. But he is proud of his place. He is attending to business. He likes to have the world know that he is at work for a busy concern. One of the Lawrences, of Boston, once said: "I would not give much for the boy that does not say 'we' before he has been with us a fortnight." The boy who says "we" identifies himself with the concern. Its interests are his. He sticks up for its credit and reputation. He takes pleasure in his work, and hopes some time to say "we" in earnest.

The boy will reap what he sows if he keeps his grit and sticks to his job. You may take off your hat to him as one of the future solid men of the town. Let his employer do the fair thing by him; check him kindly if he shows signs of being too big for his place; counsel him as to his habits and associates, and occasionally show him a pleasant prospect of advancement. A little praise does an honest boy a heap of good. Good luck to the boy who says "we."

Two Points of View.

"What a haughty, dignified lady Mrs. Doocittle is!"

"Haughty? Why the only time I ever saw her she was the picture of humility."

"Really? When was that?"

"A week or two ago. She was talking to her servant girl."

A Dollar Easily Earned.

First Tramp—"Hello, Jerry, come in and have a cocktail."

Second Tramp—"What! Cocktail! You must be livin' on Easy street now."

First Tramp—"Yes, I rather guess I am. I'm gettin' a dollar a day ter settin' in a show window to advertise a new toilet soap."

Second Tramp—"Rats!"

First Tramp—"Yes, I am, on the dead square. I represent the 'before usin'."