

LITTLE JOHN'S LETTER

TO THE

BLESSED VIRGIN

Scene—a wharf of Paris. Resting against one of the parapets, a public letter-writer had taken up position. It is Papa Bouin at his desk. He is old and wrinkled, his great moustache grizzled, an old military cloak around his shoulders, and a pipe in his mouth.

Little Jean is a boy of six years, hatless, his head covered with blond ringlets, his jacket full of holes, his breeches patched, and his shoes far too large for his little feet. He draws near to Papa Bouin.

Jean.—"Good day ! I have come to write a letter."

Bouin.—"It is ten sous"

Jean.—"Ah, then, excuse me !"

Bouin.—"Are you a soldier's son, litt'e fellow ?"

Jean.—"No, I am, mamma's son, and she is all alone."

Bouin.—"Indeed ! That won't do for me ! And you have not ten sous ?"

Jean.—"Oh, no ! I haven't any sous at all."

Bouin.—"And has not your mother ? Oh ! I see, it is a letter to have wherewith to make the soup. Eh ! little one ?"

Jean.—"Yes, that's it !"

Bouin.—"Come on ! For ten lines and a half sheet, one cannot be much poorer."

Jean was all expectation. Papa Bouin arranged his paper, dipped his pen into the ink and prepared to write :
"To Mr.——. What is his name, little one ?"

Jean.—"Whose name ?"

Bouin.—"Why, the gentleman, to be sure !"

Jean.—"What gentleman ?"

Bouin.—"The man for the soup."

Jean.—"It is not a man."

Bouin.—"Ah ! you don't say so ! A lady, then !"

Jean.—"Yes. . . no. . . that is. . ."