



JEAN NOEL.

CHRISTMAS IN FRANCE.

By Florence and Edith Scannell.

Her mother was standing at the door, and was surprised and delighted to see her back so soon, for the snow was beginning to fall quite fast by this time, and she was afraid Jeanne would have been caught in the storm.

'Oh, mother!' cried Jeanne, 'I dropped the basket and broke all the eggs, so I did not go on. But stop, mother! don't be unhappy!' as the poor woman threw up her hands in despair; 'look here!' and Jeanne turned out the money from her pocket. 'I met a lovely little lady, all in blue—just like me!'

'Like you! Is the child mad?' exclaimed the mother, bewildered.

'No, I mean dressed like me; no, not like me,' hurried on Jeanne, too excited to arrange her ideas, 'but all in blue, only her coat was velvet—oh, so beautiful!—and she had the loveliest golden hair, and silk stockings, and blue eyes, and kid boots!'

Madame Briguez could not help laughing at Jeanne's mixed-up description.

'And what happened? Did she speak to you? Did she give you the money?'

'Yes, mother,' and Jeanne related the whole adventure; in fact, her mother heard of nothing else all the time she was preparing the supper.

'It must have been the little Countess Yolande and her brother. Babette said the children were to arrive before the rest of the family. That was why she was so anxious to have the eggs. What a pity they were broken! But don't trouble yourself, ma fille, I know you could not help that.'

'Mother, who is Jean Noel?'

'Jean Noel! Oh, that is an old tale. I remember my grandmother



used to tell me about him. It is a legend that he is heard singing in the mountains about Christmas time, and generally comes to some poor cottage—sometimes in the form of an old man, sometimes as a little child. If the people are kind and receive him well they do not regret it, for he brings happiness and love with him. But it is a tale, mon enfant, so don't be troubling your head about him. The little Count was joking, that was all.'

'But is Jean Noel an angel, then, mother?' inquired little Jeanne in an awestruck tone, fixing her big, serious dark eyes on her mother's face.

'Yes, that's it,' answered her mother; 'and angels won't go where the people are bad, so it is only those who try to do their duty that Jean Noel ever visits, my grandmother said.'

Jeanne pondered deeply over this, until her father came in, looking like a snow man, so covered was he from head to foot.

'It is lucky it does not thaw yet, or I don't know how I should have got home,' he said, shaking the snow from his broad-brimmed hat and out of his long hair. 'Ah, soup, that is good!' as his wife placed a bowl before him, with a piece of black bread.

Jeanne was longing to tell him of her meeting, but he looked so wearied and sad that she did not like to begin till he had rested a while.

'Eh bien! Pierre, did you see Maitre Rigoux?' asked his wife.



'Yes; he says the money must be paid by the first of January or we must turn out, as he has another tenant willing to pay more rent.'

'Oh, Pierre! after your father and grandfather having always lived here! I am sure the Count would not turn us out. If we could only let him know!'

'Ay, that's just it—but we can't; and, what's more, there's no chance of our getting the money. I went round everywhere I could think of to see if any wood was wanted, but only got an order from the Doctor for a few logs.'

'If only Jean Noel could come!' thought little Jeanne. 'What a pity those olden times were past when her great-grandmother was alive and such things happened!'

She was very silent and thoughtful all the evening, knitting diligently away at her stocking, till her mother sent her off to bed.

The next morning Jeanne was up early, searching eagerly in the hen-house for eggs.

'Mother! mother! here are three eggs? Shall I take them up to Tante Babette? They would make a little omelette for the young Countess.'

'Yes, dear child, you shall go with them; it is a nice bright morning.'

Jeanne was soon ready and started on her way. She had a project in her little head, and was wondering how she could manage to carry it out. If she only had the courage! At last she reached the big iron gates of the old Chateau, and managed to pull the bell by standing on tip-toe and holding on to the chain with both hands. It nearly lifted her off her feet, but she heard the clanging in the distance and the click of the bolt

as it was drawn up a few minutes after and, pushing open the heavy gate, she trotted round to the back entrance and entered the big kitchen.

'Well, you little Good-for-Nothing,' said Tante Babette, her broad face beaming at the sight of her niece. 'Where are my eggs, I should like to know? A pretty person your moth-



er is to promise me some. Let me see what you have there. Three! Why, have you come up all this way to bring me those? Bah—and I wanted them last night! Get along with you!' and Babette pretended to walk off in great indignation.

'But, Tante Babette, listen to me,' pleaded Jeanne, holding on to her aunt's thick woollen skirt. She then related her adventure of the day before.

'Oh, ho! that was it, eh? Well, I suppose I mustn't scold,' said Babette. 'Here, petite, I dare say you have not had much of a breakfast,' and she pushed Jeanne into a chair and gave her a bowl of warm milk and a piece of white bread, which was a great treat to the child. Jeanne chattered away, asking no end of questions about the little Countess, and told her aunt the trouble her father was in about his rent.

'Dear Aunt Babette, can't you ask M. le Comte to let us stay in the cottage?' she begged.

'My dear, I never see the Count; and I don't suppose he knows anything about the cottage. Maitre Rigoux arranges all that; the Count doesn't trouble himself about such things.'

Jeanne sat silent and troubled.

'If the little Countess Yolande would speak about it,' she said hesitatingly, at last. 'Would she listen to me if I asked her?'

Babette looked grave. 'Well, that is not a bad idea. I will go and ask Fanchette, the maid, if Mam'selle Yolande is willing to speak with you.'

Jeanne felt frightened while her aunt went to make the inquiry.

'It would make father and mother so happy,' she said to herself, to keep up her courage. She had been longing for this opportunity all the time of her walk to the Chateau, and now it had, perhaps, come, she felt her heart sink.

Babette returned, smiling.



'The Mam'selle will see you, ma petite. Now, remember to curtsy prettily.'

Jeanne got up and followed her aunt, holding a bit of her gown as they went up the stone staircase, and stopped at the door of a room in one of the round towers. Babette tapped at the door.

'Come in,' said the sweet voice Jeanne remembered. Babette opened the door and pushed in her trembling little niece.

'Good morning, little one!' said Yolande, smiling kindly at her.

Jeanne dropped a curtsy and stood twisting the corner of her apron, not knowing how to begin her story. She thought Yolande looked like an angel or a fairy as she stood there, her golden hair falling over her shoulders, and dressed in a white woollen frock and blue ribbons.

'Come and have some bon-bons, and would you like to see my doll?'

Jeanne gazed in awe and admiration at the wonderful doll, dressed all in satin, which held an eye-glass in her hand, and could walk and turn her head, and she felt she ought to curtsy to such a fine lady. Yolande's brother was in the room, but was apparently absorbed in studying some old books, and did not come forward. After a little while, encouraged by Yolande's gentle, gracious ways, Jeanne made an effort to tell her trouble about the cottage. Yolande listened with great attention, and promised to speak to her father as soon as she could.

'He is not yet arrived; but I will not forget, little Jeanne.'

'Thank you, thank you, Mam'selle!' said Jeanne, her brown eyes shining as she made her best curtsy.

(To be Continued.)

BREAD CAST UPON THE WATERS.

Two gentlemen met on a steamer during a Scotch excursion and talked with interest of many things, amongst others of the Sunday-schools.

'To tell the truth,' said one, 'I am not very enthusiastic about that kind of work. I was a teacher for many years, and after all I seemed to have done no good.'

'Well, I do believe in Sunday-school work,' said the other. 'As a lad I received lifelong influences for good in my old class at school; and he named the school with which he had once been connected.'

'Were you taught there?' cried the other. 'That was where I taught. Were you there in my time? My name is—'

'And I was your scholar. I remember you now.'

The younger man gave his name, and memories succeeded each other concerning that old school, unforgetten by both. There, side by side, stood the teacher, who believed he had done nothing, and the man he had influenced for life.—American paper.