ФРАНСОА КОПЕ
THE LOST CHILD

Превод от френски: J. Matthewman, —

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On that morning, which was the morning before Christmas, two important events happened simultaneously—the sun rose, and so did M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy.

Unquestionably the sun, illuminating suddenly the whole of Paris with its morning rays, is an old friend regarded with affection by everybody, It is particularly welcome after a fortnight of misty atmosphere and gray skies, when the wind has cleared the air and allowed the sun's rays to reach the earth again. Besides all of which the sun is a person of importance. Formerly, he was regarded as a god, and was called Osiris, Apollyon, and I don't know what else. But do not imagine that because the sun is so important he is of greater influence than M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy, millionaire banker, director of the Comptoir Général de Crédit, administrator of several big companies, deputy and member of the General Counsel of the Eure, officer of the Legion of Honor, etc., etc. And whatever opinion the sun may have about himself, he certainly has not a higher opinion than M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy has of himself. So we are authorized to state, and we consider ourselves justified in stating, that on the morning in question, at about a quarter to eight, the sun and M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy rose.

Certainly the manner of rising of these two great powers mentioned was not the same. The good old sun began by doing a great many pretty actions. As the sleet had, during the night, covered the bare branches of the trees in the boulevard Malesherbes, where the hôtel Godefroy is situated, with a powdered coating, the great magician sun amused himself by transforming the branches into great bouquets of red coral. At the same time he scattered his rays impartially on those poor passers-by whom necessity sent out, so early in the morning, to gain their daily bread, He even had a smile for the poor clerk, who, in a thin overcoat, was hurrying to his office, as well as for the grisette, shivering under her thin, insufficient clothing; for the workman carrying half a loaf under his arm, for the car-conductor as he punched the tickets, and for the dealer in roast chestnuts, who was roasting his first panful. In short, the sun gave pleasure to everybody in the world. M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy, on the contrary, rose in quite a different frame of mind. On the previous evening he had dined with the Minister for Agriculture. The dinner, from the removal of the potage to the salad, bristled with truffles, and the banker's stomach, aged forty-seven years, experienced the burning and biting of pyrosis. So the manner in which M.

Jean-Baptiste Godefroy rang for his valet-de-chambre was so expressive that, as he got some warm water for his master's shaving, Charles said to the kitchen-maid:

"There he goes! The monkey is barbarously ill-tempered again this morning. My poor Gertrude, we're going to have a miserable day."

Whereupon, walking on tiptoe, with eyes modestly cast down, he entered the chamber of his master, opened the curtains, lit the fire, and made all the necessary preparations for the toilet with the discreet demeanor and respectful gestures of a sacristan placing the sacred vessels on the altar for the priest.

"What sort of weather this morning?" demanded M. Godefroy curtly, as he buttoned his undervest of gray swandown upon a stomach that was already a little too prominent.

"Very cold, sir," replied Charles meekly. "At six o'clock the thermometer marked seven degrees above zero. But, as you will see, sir, the sky is quite clear, and I think we are going to have a fine morning."

In stropping his razor, M. Godefroy approached the window, drew aside one of the hangings, looked on the boulevard, which was bathed in brightness, and made a slight grimace which bore some resemblance to a smile.

It is all very well to be perfectly stiff and correct, and to know that it is bad taste to show feeling of any kind in the presence of domestics, but the appearance of the roguish sun in the middle of December sends such a glow of warmth to the heart that it is impossible to disguise the fact. So M. Godefroy deigned, as before observed, to smile. If some one had whispered to the opulent banker that his smile had anything in common with that of the printer's boy, who was enjoying himself by making a slide on the pavement, M. Godefroy would have been highly incensed. But it really was so all the same; and during the space of one minute this man who was so occupied by business matters, this leading light in the financial and political worlds, indulged in the childish pastime of watching the passers-by, and following with his eyes the files of conveyances as they gaily rolled in the sunshine.

But pray do not be alarmed. Such a weakness could not last long. People of no account, and those who have nothing to do, may be able to let their time slip by in doing nothing. It is very well for women, children, poets, and riffraff. M. Godefroy had other fish to fry; and the work of the

day which was commencing promised to be exceptionally heavy. From half-past eight to ten o'clock he had a meeting at his office with a certain number of gentlemen, all of whom bore a striking resemblance to M. Godefroy. Like him, they were very nervous; they had risen with the sun, they were all blasés, and they all had the same object in view—to gain money. After breakfast (which he took after the meeting), M. Godefroy had to leap into his carriage and rush to the Bourse, to exchange a few words with other gentlemen who had also risen at dawn, but who had not the least spark of imagination among them. (The conversations were always on the same subject—money.) From there, without losing an instant, M. Godefroy went to preside over another meeting of acquaintances entirely void of compassion and tenderness. The meeting was held round a baize-covered table, which was strewn with heaps of papers and well provided with ink-wells. The conversation again turned on money, and various methods of gaining it. After the aforesaid meeting he, in his capacity of deputy, had to appear before several commissions (always held in rooms where there were baize-covered tables and ink-wells and heaps of papers). There he found men as devoid of sentiment as he was, all utterly incapable of neglecting any occasion of gaining money, but who, nevertheless, had the extreme goodness to sacrifice several hours of the afternoon to the glory of France.

After having quickly shaved he donned a morning suit, the elegant cut and finish of which showed that the old beau of nearly fifty had not ceased trying to please. When he shaved he spared the narrow strip of pepper-and-salt beard round his chin, as it gave him the air of a trust-worthy family man in the eyes of the Arrogants and of fools in general. Then he descended to his cabinet, where he received the file of men who were entirely occupied by one thought—that of augmenting their capital. These gentlemen discussed several projected enterprises, all of them of considerable importance, notably that of a new railroad to be laid across a wild desert. Another scheme was for the founding of monster works in the environs of Paris, another of a mine to be worked in one of the South American republics. It goes without saying that no one asked if the railway would have passengers or goods to carry, or if the proposed works should manufacture cotton nightcaps or distil whisky; whether the mine was to be of virgin gold or of second-rate copper: certainly not. The conversation of M. Godefroy's morning callers turned exclusively upon the profits which it would be possible to realize during the week which should follow the issue

of the shares. They discussed particularly the values of the shares, which they knew would be destined before long to be worth less than the paper on which they were printed in fine style.

These conversations, bristling with figures, lasted till ten o'clock precisely, and then the director of the Comptoir Général de Crédit, who, by the way, was an honest man—at least, as honest as is to be found in business—courteously conducted his last visitor to the head of the stairway. The visitor named was an old villain, as rich as Croesus, who, by a not uncommon chance, enjoyed the general esteem of the public; whereas, had justice been done to him, he would have been lodging at the expense of the State in one of those large establishments provided by a thoughtful government for smaller delinquents; and there he would have pursued a useful and healthy calling for a lengthy period, the exact length having been fixed by the judges of the supreme court. But M. Godefroy showed him out relentlessly, notwithstanding his importance—it was absolutely necessary to be at the Bourse at 11 o'clock—and went into the dining-room.

It was a luxuriously furnished room. The furniture and plate would have served to endow a cathedral. Nevertheless, notwithstanding that M. Godefroy took a gulp of bicarbonate of soda, his indigestion refused to subside, consequently the banker could only take the scantiest breakfast—that of a dyspeptic. In the midst of such luxury, and under the eye of a well-paid butler, M. Godefroy could only eat a couple of boiled eggs and nibble a little mutton chop. The man of money trifled with dessert—took only a crumb of Roquefort—not more than two cents' worth. Then the door opened and an overdressed but charming little child—young Raoul, four years old—the son of the company director, entered the room, accompanied by his German nursery governess.

This event occurred every day at the same hour—a quarter to eleven, precisely, while the carriage which was to take the banker to the Bourse was awaiting the gentleman who had only a quarter of an hour to give to paternal sentiment. It was not that he did not love his son. He did love him—nay, he adored him, in his own particular way. But then, you know, business is business.

At the age of forty-two, when already worldly-wise and blasé, he had fancied himself in love with the daughter of one of his club friends—Marquis de Neufontaine, an old rascal—a nobleman, but one whose card-playing was more than open to suspicion, and who would have been

expelled from the club more than once but for the influence of M. Godefroy, The nobleman was only too happy to become the father-in-law of a man who would pay his debts, and without any scruples he handed over his daughter—a simple and ingenuous child of seventeen, who was taken from a convent to be married—to the worldly banker. The girl was certainly sweet and pretty, but she had no dowry except numerous aristocratic prejudices and romantic illusions, and her father thought he was fortunate in getting rid of her on such favorable terms. M. Godefroy, who was the son of an avowed old miser of Andelys, had always remained a man of the people, and intensely vulgar. In spite of his improved circumstances, he had not improved. His entire lack of tact and refinement was painful to his young wife, whose tenderest feelings he ruthlessly and thoughtlessly trampled upon. Things were looking unpromising, when, happily for her, Madame Godefroy died in giving birth to her firstborn. When he spoke of his deceased wife, the banker waxed poetical, although had she lived they would have been divorced in six months. His son he loved dearly for several reasons—first, because the child was an only son; secondly, because he was a scion of two such houses as Godefroy and Neufontaine; finally, because the man of money had naturally great respect for the heir to many millions. So the youngster had golden rattles and other similar toys, and was brought up like a young Dauphin. But his father, overwhelmed with business worries, could never give the child more than fifteen minutes per day of his precious time—and, as on the day mentioned, it was always during “cheese”—and for the rest of the day the father abandoned the child to the care of the servants.

“Good morning, Raoul.”

“Good morning, papa.”

And the company director, having put his serviette away, sat young Raoul on his left knee, took the child’s head between his big paws, and in stroking and kissing it actually forgot all his money matters and even his note of the afternoon, which was of great importance to him, as by it he could gain quite an important amount of patronage.

“Papa,” said little Raoul suddenly, “will Father Christmas put anything in my shoe tonight?”

The father answered with “Yes, if you are a good child.” This was very striking from a man who was a pronounced freethinker, who always applauded every anti-clerical attack in the Chamber with a vigorous “Hear,

hear." He made a mental note that he must buy some toys for his child that very afternoon.

Then he turned to the nursery governess with:

"Are you quite satisfied with Raoul, Mademoiselle Bertha?"

Mademoiselle Bertha became as red as a peony at being addressed, as if the question were scarcely comme il faut, and replied by a little imbecile snigger, which seemed fully to satisfy M. Godefroy's curiosity about his son's conduct.

"It's fine to-day," said the financier, "but cold. If you take Raoul to Monceau Park, mademoiselle, please be careful to wrap him up well."

Mademoiselle, by a second fit of idiotic smiling, having set at rest M. Godefroy's doubts and fears on that essential point, he kissed his child, left the room hastily, and in the hall was enveloped in his fur coat by Charles, who also closed the carriage door. Then the faithful fellow went off to the café which he frequented, Rue de Miromesnil, where he had promised to meet the coachman of the baroness who lived opposite, to play a game of billiards, thirty up—and spot-barred, of course.

Thanks to the brown bay—for which a thousand francs over and above its value was paid by M. Godefroy as a result of a sumptuous snail supper given to that gentleman's coachman by the horse-dealer—thanks to the expensive brown bay which certainly went well, the financier was able to get through his many engagements satisfactorily. He appeared punctually at the Bourse, sat at several committee tables, and at a quarter to five, by voting with the ministry, he helped to reassure France and Europe that the rumors of a ministerial crisis had been totally unfounded. He voted with the ministry because he had succeeded in obtaining the favors which he demanded as the price of his vote.

After he had thus nobly fulfilled his duty to himself and his country, M. Godefroy remembered what he had said to his child on the subject of Father Christmas, and gave his coachman the address of a dealer in toys. There he bought, and had put in his carriage, a fantastic rocking-horse, mounted on casters—a whip in each ear; a box of leaden soldiers—all as exactly alike as those grenadiers of the Russian regiment of the time of Paul I, who all had black hair and snub noses; and a score of other toys, all equally striking and costly. Then, as he returned home, softly reposing in his well-swung carriage, the rich banker, who, after all, was a father, began to think with pride of his little boy and to form plans for his future.

When the child grew up he should have an education worthy of a prince, and he would be one, too, for there was no longer any aristocracy except that of money, and his boy would have a capital of about 80,000,000 francs.

If his father, a pettifogging provincial lawyer, who had formerly dined in the Latin Quarter when in Paris, who had remarked every evening when putting on a white tie that he looked as fine as if he were going to a wedding—if he had been able to accumulate an enormous fortune, and to become thereby a power in the republic; if he had been able to obtain in marriage a young lady, one of whose ancestors had fallen at Marignano, what an important personage little Raoul might become. M. Godefroy built all sorts of air-castles for his boy, forgetting that Christmas is the birthday of a very poor little child, son of a couple of vagrants, born in a stable, where the parents only found lodging through charity.

In the midst of the banker's dreams the coachman cried: "Door, please," and drove into the yard. As he went up the steps M. Godefroy was thinking that he had barely time to dress for dinner; but on entering the vestibule he found all the domestics crowded in front of him in a state of alarm and confusion. In a corner, crouching on a seat, was the German nursery-governess, crying. When she saw the banker she buried her face in her hands and wept still more copiously than before. M. Godefroy felt that some misfortune had happened.

"What's the meaning of all this? What's amiss? What has happened?"

Charles, the valet de chambre, a sneaking rascal of the worst type, looked at his master with eyes full of pity and stammered: "Mr. Raoul—"

"My boy?"

"Lost, sir. The stupid German did it. Since four o'clock this afternoon he has not been seen."

The father staggered back like one who had been hit by a ball. The German threw herself at his feet, screaming: "Mercy, mercy!" and the domestics all spoke at the same time.

"Bertha didn't go to parc Monceau. She lost the child over there on the fortifications. We have sought him all over, sir. We went to the office for you, sir, and then to the Chamber, but you had just left. Just imagine, the German had a rendezvous with her lover every day, beyond the ramparts, near the gate of Asnières. What a shame! It is a place full of low gipsies and strolling players. Perhaps the child has been stolen. Yes, sir, we informed

the police at once. How could we imagine such a thing? A hypocrite, that German! She had a rendezvous, doubtless, with a countryman—a Prussian spy, sure enough!"

His son lost! M. Godefroy seemed to have a torrent of blood rushing through his head. He sprang at Mademoiselle, seized her by the arms and shook her furiously.

"Where did you lose him, you miserable girl? Tell me the truth before I shake you to pieces. Do you hear? Do you hear?"

But the unfortunate girl could only cry and beg for mercy.

The banker tried to be calm. No, it was impossible. Nobody would dare to steal his boy. Somebody would find him and bring him back. Of that there could be no doubt. He could scatter money about right and left, and could have the entire police force at his orders. And he would set to work at once, for not an instant should be lost.

"Charles, don't let the horses be taken out. You others, see that this girl doesn't escape. I'm going to the Prefecture."

And M. Godefroy, with his heart thumping against his sides as if it would break them, his hair wild with fright, darted into his carriage, which at once rolled off as fast as the horses could take it. What irony! The carriage was full of glittering playthings, which sparkled every time a gaslight shone on them. For the next day was the birthday of the divine Infant at whose cradle wise men and simple shepherds alike adored.

"My poor little Raoul! Poor darling! Where is my boy?" repeated the father as in his anguish he dug his nails into the cushions of the carriage.

At that moment all his titles and decorations, his honors, his millions, were valueless to him. He had one single idea burning in his brain. "My poor child! Where is my child?"

At last he reached the Prefecture of Police. But no one was there—the office had been deserted for some time.

"I am M. Godefroy, deputy from L'Eure—My little boy is lost in Paris; a child of four years. I must see the Prefect."

He slipped a louis into the hand of the concierge. The good old soul, a veteran with a gray mustache, less for the sake of the money than out of compassion for the poor father, led him to the Prefect's private apartments. M. Godefroy was finally ushered into the room of the man in whom were centred all his hopes. He was in evening dress, and wore a monocle; his manner was frigid and rather pretentious. The distressed father, whose

knees trembled through emotion, sank into an armchair, and, bursting into tears, told of the loss of his boy—told the story stammeringly and with many breaks, for his voice was choked by sobs.

The Prefect, who was also father of a family, was inwardly moved at the sight of his visitor's grief, but he repressed his emotion and assumed a cold and self-important air.

"You say, sir, that your child has been missing since four o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Just when night was falling, confound it. He isn't at all precocious, speaks very little, doesn't know where he lives, and can't even pronounce his own name?"

"Unfortunately that is so."

"Not far from Asnières gate? A suspected quarter. But cheer up. We have a very intelligent Commissaire de Police there. I'll telephone to him."

The distressed father was left alone for five minutes. How his temples throbbed and his heartbeat!

Then, suddenly, the Prefect reappeared, smiling with satisfaction. "Found!"

Whereupon M. Godefroy rushed to the Prefect, whose hand he pressed till that functionary winced with the pain.

"I must acknowledge that we were exceedingly fortunate. The little chap is blond, isn't he? Rather pale? In blue velvet? Black felt hat, with a white feather in it?"

"Yes, yes; that's he. That's my little Raoul."

"Well, he's at the house of a poor fellow down in that quarter who had just been at the police office to make his declaration to the Commissaire. Here's his address, which I took down: 'Pierron, rue des Cailloux, Levaïlois-Perret.' With good horses you may reach your boy in less than an hour. Certainly, you won't find him in an aristocratic quarter; his surroundings won't be of the highest. The man who found him is only a small dealer in vegetables."

But that was of no importance to M. Godefroy, who, having expressed his gratitude to the Prefect, leaped down the stairs four at a time, and sprang into his carriage. At that moment he realized how devotedly he loved his child. As he drove away he no longer thought of little Raoul's princely education and magnificent inheritance. He was decided never again to hand over the child entirely to the hands of servants, and he also

made up his mind to devote less time to monetary matters and the glory of France and attend more to his own. The thought also occurred to him that France wouldn't be likely to suffer from the neglect. He had hitherto been ashamed to recognize the existence of an old-maid sister of his father, but he decided to send for her to his house. She would certainly shock his lackeys by her primitive manners and ideas. But what of that? She would take care of his boy, which to him was of much more importance than the good opinion of his servants. The financier, who was always in a hurry, never felt so eager to arrive punctually at a committee meeting as he was to reach the lost little one. For the first time in his life he was longing through pure affection to take the child in his arms.

The carriage rolled rapidly along in the clear, crisp night air down boulevard Malesherbes; and, having crossed the ramparts and passed the large houses, plunged into the quiet solitude of suburban streets. When the carriage stopped M. Godefroy saw a wretched hovel, on which was the number he was seeking; it was the house where Pierron lived. The door of the house opened immediately, and a big, rough-looking fellow with red mustache appeared. One of his sleeves was empty. Seeing the gentleman in the carriage, Pierron said cheerily:

"So you are the little one's father. Don't be afraid. The little darling is quite safe," and, stepping aside in order to allow M. Godefroy to pass, he placed his finger on his lips with: "Hush! The little one is asleep!"

Yes, it was a real hovel. By the dim light of a little oil lamp M. Godefroy could just distinguish a dresser from which a drawer was missing, some broken chairs, a round table on which stood a beer-mug which was half empty, three glasses, some cold meat on a plate, and on the bare plaster of the wall two gaudy pictures—a bird's-eye view of the Exposition of 1889, with the Eiffel Tower in bright blue, and the portrait of General Boulanger when a handsome young lieutenant. This last evidence of weakness of the tenant of the house may well be excused, since it was shared by nearly everybody in France. The man took the lamp and went on tiptoe to the corner of the room where, on a clean bed, two little fellows were fast asleep. In the little one, around whom the other had thrown a protecting arm, M. Godefroy recognized his son.

"The youngsters were tired to death, and so sleepy," said Pierron, trying to soften his rough voice. "I had no idea when you would come, so gave them some supper and put them to bed, and then I went to make a

declaration at the police office. Zidore generally sleeps up in the garret, but I thought they would be better here, and that I should be better able to watch them."

M. Godefroy, however, scarcely heard the explanation. Strangely moved, he looked at the two sleeping infants on an iron bedstead and covered with an old blanket which had once been used either in barracks or hospital. Little Raoul, who was still in his velvet suit, looked so frail and delicate compared with his companion that the banker almost envied the latter his brown complexion.

"Is he your boy?" he asked Pierron.

"No," answered he. "I am a bachelor, and don't suppose I shall ever marry, because of my accident. You see, a dray passed over my arm—that was all. Two years ago a neighbor of mine died, when that child was only five years old. The poor mother really died of starvation. She wove wreaths for the cemeteries, but could make nothing worth mentioning at that trade—not enough to live. However, she worked for the child for five years, and then the neighbors had to buy wreaths for her. So I took care of the youngster. Oh, it was nothing much, and I was soon repaid. He is seven years old, and is a sharp little fellow, so he helps me a great deal. On Sundays and Thursdays, and the other days after school, he helps me push my handcart. Zidore is a smart little chap. It was he who found your boy."

"What!" exclaimed M. Godefroy—"that child!"

"Oh, he's quite a little man, I assure you. When he left school he found your child, who was walking on ahead, crying like a fountain. He spoke to him and comforted him, like an old grandfather. The difficulty is, that one can't easily understand what your little one says—English words are mixed up with German and French. So we couldn't get much out of him, nor could we learn his address. Zidore brought him to me—I wasn't far away; and then all the old women in the place came round chattering and croaking like so many frogs, and all full of advice. 'Take him to the police,' said some. But Zidore protested. 'That would scare him,' said he, for like all Parisians, he has no particular liking for the police— and besides, your little one didn't wish to leave him. So I came back here with the child as soon as I could. They had supper, and then off to bed. Don't they look sweet?"

When he was in his carriage, M. Godefroy had decided to reward the finder of his child handsomely—to give him a handful of that gold so easily

gained. Since entering the house he had seen a side of human nature with which he was formerly unacquainted—the brave charity of the poor in their misery. The courage of the poor girl who had worked herself to death weaving wreaths to keep her child; the generosity of the poor cripple in adopting the orphan, and above all, the intelligent goodness of the little street Arab in protecting the child who was still smaller than himself—all this touched M. Godefroy deeply and set him reflecting. For the thought had occurred to him that there were other cripples who needed to be looked after as well as Pierron, and other orphans as well as Zidore. He also debated whether it would not be better to employ his time looking after them, and whether money might not be put to a better use than merely gaining money. Such was his reverie as he stood looking at the two sleeping children. Finally, he turned round to study the features of the greengrocer, and was charmed by the loyal expression in the face of the man, and his clear, truthful eyes.

"My friend," said M. Godefroy, "you and your adopted son have rendered me an immense service. I shall soon prove to you that I am not ungrateful. But, for to-day—I see that you are not in comfortable circumstances, and I should like to leave a small proof of my thankfulness."

But the hand of the cripple arrested that of the banker, which was diving into his coat-pocket where he kept bank-notes.

"No, sir; no! Anybody else should have done just as we have done. I will not accept any recompense; but pray don't take offense. Certainly, I am not rolling in wealth, but please excuse my pride—that of an old soldier; I have the Tonquin medal—and I don't wish to eat food which I haven't earned."

"As you like," said the financier; "but an old soldier like you is capable of something better. You are too good to push a handcart. I will make some arrangement for you, never fear."

The cripple responded by a quiet smile, and said coldly: "Well, sir, if you really wish to do something for me—"

"You'll let me care for Zidore, won't you?" cried M. Godefroy, eagerly.

"That I will, with the greatest of pleasure," responded Pierron, joyfully. "I have often, thought about the child's future. He is a sharp little fellow. His teachers are delighted with him."

Then Pierron suddenly stopped, and an expression came over his face which M. Godefroy at once interpreted as one of distrust. The thought evidently was: “Oh, when he has once left us he’ll forget us entirely.”

“You can safely pick the child up in your arms and take him to the carriage. He’ll be better at home than here, of course. Oh, you needn’t be afraid of disturbing him. He is fast asleep, and you can just pick him up. He must have his shoes on first, though.”

Following Pierron’s glance M. Godefroy perceived on the hearth, where a scanty coke fire was dying out, two pairs of children’s shoes;—the elegant ones of Raoul, and the rough ones of Zidore. Each pair contained a little toy and a package of bonbons.

“Don’t think about that,” said Pierron in an abashed tone. “Zidore put the shoes there. You know children still believe in Christmas and the child Jesus, whatever scholars may say about fables; so, as I came back from the commissaire, as I didn’t know whether your boy would have to stay here to-night, I got those things for them both.”

At which the eyes of M. Godefroy, the freethinker, the hardened capitalist, and blasé man of the world, filled with tears.

He rushed out of the house, but returned in a minute with his arms full of the superb mechanical horse, the box of leaden soldiers, and the rest of the costly playthings bought by him in the afternoon, and which had not even been taken out of the carriage.

“My friend, my dear friend,” said he to the greengrocer, “see, these are the presents which Christmas has brought to my little Raoul. I want him to find them here, when he awakens, and to share them with Zidore, who will henceforth be his playmate and friend. You’ll trust me now, won’t you? I’ll take care both of Zidore and of you, and then I shall ever remain in your debt, for not only have you found my boy, but you have also reminded me, who am rich and lived only for myself, that there are other poor who need to be looked after. I swear by these two sleeping children, I won’t forget them any longer.”

Such is the miracle which happened on the 24th of December of last year, ladies and gentlemen, at Paris, in the full flow of modern egotism. It doesn’t sound likely—that I own; and I am compelled to attribute this miraculous event to the influence of the Divine Child who came down to earth nearly nineteen centuries ago to command men to love one another.

ЗАСЛУГИ

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