Phillips, Hosea
Etude Du Parler de la Paroisse Evangeline. Paris
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NOEL (in French)

There is nothing which makes children more happy than the day on which Papa (Pere) Noel is due to arrive. They tell each other all kinds of things: that which they want as gifts, that which they wished so much to receive; that which they will have for their Christmas dinner. On Christmas Eve, after having shot Roman candles, they hang their stockings on the fireplace mantle and wait until the following morning. As soon as they awaken, they run to their stockings and the cries and exclamations begin. Each has received something more than he was waiting for.

Although the gifts are not very beautiful (they were not expensive, because the poor Cajuns do not have much money), the children find fruit, candy, some cakes; and to amuse themselves, there are always some firecrackers, Roman candles and toys.

On New Year's day the men go to town and buy small glasses: small glasses of spirits (brandy) made of grain, "egg-nogs," and toddies. For dinner, all the family: the old parents, the young and the small children are there. And the little cousins show each other what they received for Christmas. Real Acadian holidays are spent thus: The Parents talk of conditions and affairs, crops, the health of each; but what is the most interesting is when the old grandmother decides to recount legends of olden times. There are stories which are very well known. Here is one:

A long time ago a little girl lived with her mother who was a widow and who had no other child. Her only son had disappeared. The child wanted to go see the gifts in town, but her mother could not see how she could go there, for lack of transportation: no buggy, no wagon, not even a horse and it was too cold to think of going there on foot; in addition, it was raining. While she was thinking of this, she heard a loud noise outside. The man who was driving the automobile which was making all this noise stepped out with a large box and some little boxes. The child ran to open the door for him, but she saw that she did not know him. He laughed and said that he was Pere Noel; but she knew that Pere Noel (Father Christmas) was supposed to have a long white beard, and that he was supposed to be dressed in red, and this man was not. And also, he did not have a sleigh pulled by reindeer. He entered and placed a large box at the fireplace and the small ones on the table. He said: "See What Pere Noel brought you for Christmas".
She was so happy that she could not speak, the older mother cried with joy. The man turned and said: "Well don't you recognize me?" They both threw themselves on him because they had finally recognized him. He wanted them to see the town. The child was very happy, but the mother decided to stay in order to prepare the dinner. They left. The old woman prepared the meal and waited a long time; they did not return. She became worried. Since it was raining she decided to go up the road to try to look for them. No one was on the road. She began to cry as if her heart would break. When it was dark, she reentered the house and she continued her prayers until she fell asleep. Near midnight, she heard a loud noise outside. She went out. What do you think she saw? A sleigh pulled not by reindeer, but by an older horse of Uncle Edward's. And there was a real Père Noël inside. The sleigh was filled with packages also: gifts for all. And after dinner, they began opening all the gifts. The old woman's son remained. They have lived happily ever since.

Translated by Pearl Mary Segura.
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