

XIV. Hush!

The worthy Abbé Romorantin was visibly disconcerted. Monsieur Galapian, a man of unprepossessing appearance, had a mocking smile upon his thick lips. The hussar Joli-Coeur scratched his ear until it bled. The little Touraineans had opened their eyes and mouths wide. Sapajou was making faces. Fanchon's head, hands and knees were all a-tremble, as if the nurse were about to faint.

The only exceptions were the faces of pretty Lotte and Vicomte Paul, each facing the other, which had not changed at all. Lotte was still cold and gentle, like the blonde angels in pious images.

Paul laughed abruptly, drew himself upright, and repeated:

"The Wandering Jew? Who is the Wandering Jew?"

No one made any response.

But when Abbé Romorantin happened to sneeze, everyone—glad to break the silence—exclaimed: "God bless you!"

The Abbé thanked them.

Vicomte Paul put his hand on his hip. "I'm going to get angry," he declared, shortly, "if no one tells me who the Wandering Jew is. I've never seen a beard like..."

Galapian sang:

*"Never had they seen
A man thus bearded..."*

"What's that you say, Monsieur Addition?" Vicomte Paul demanded.

"Hush!" hissed the business manager.

"Hush!" repeated the Abbé.

And all around the table there was a long-winded echo:

"Hush! Hush! Hush!"

XV. Vicomte Paul's Second Idea

As you might well imagine, this was not to Vicomte Paul's liking. The magnificent child was used to being obeyed. He tapped his foot and swore. Everyone was fearful, but everyone kept silent.

And to cover their confusion everyone, including Fanchon, took up their glasses of Chambertin and drank.

The Sun was slowly sinking into its dazzling bed.

"Will no one tell me," cried Vicomte Paul, "why this gentleman does not drink beer, and in what country beggars wear golden rags?"

"Madame la Comtesse has forbidden it," murmured Fanchon.

"Monsieur le Comte too," added Joli-Coeur.

"Well!" cried Vicomte Paul. "It's me who is Papa, and Lotte is Mama. We give you permission to speak—isn't that right, Lotte?"

It seemed that the oblique rays of sunlight passing over Lotte's diaphanous beauty lacked the power to color her sculpted whiteness.

“May God have pity on us!” stammered the nurse. “She was like that when I saw her for the first time...”

In a voice as sweet as a lullaby, but so faint that they did not know whether they heard her correctly, Lotte murmured:

“My father is coming...”

Vicomte Paul was not listening, because he had been struck by a new idea.

“To be sure,” he said, “I’m a fool: I have only to read the legend for myself!”

XVI. A Confusion of Tongues

There was then a great tumult in the pavilion where Vicomte Paul was hosting the Prefecture dinner, while waiting for the English. Everyone got up, shouting. Monsieur Galapian was howling like the Jews one hears on the trading-floor in the Bourse; Abbé Romorantin was sneezing in distress; The little Touraineans were buzzing like flies; and Sapajou was imitating the crow of a cockerel, rather more skillfully.

Fanchon and Joli-Coeur threw themselves upon Vicomte Paul from either side, to snatch away the fatal print, which tore in two, bisecting the body of the Wandering Jew.

Lotte bowed her head and released a great sigh. That strange little girl was no longer made of alabaster; the transparency of her graceful form was increasing...

“We’ve drunk enough Chambertin,” said the cellarman. “Shall we pass round the champagne?”

“There is no Wandering Jew!” Fanchon declared, resolutely.

“There certainly isn’t!” Joli-Coeur agreed.

“It’s a legendary myth,” the Abbé explained.

“It’s a fib,” Galapian corrected him.

Sapajou also knew how to yelp like a little dog. He gave a demonstration: “Yap! Yap! Yap! Yap!”

Fanchon went on: “It’s used to rock little children to sleep...”

“And to make grown-ups laugh,” added Joli-Coeur.

“Even so,” the Abbé objected, “there’s an important Christian message underneath it.”

“I don’t know about that,” said Joli-Coeur, “but the tune’s nice.”

“And easy to sing,” Fanchon put in. “Listen.”

She sang, in her slightly broken voice:

*“Gentlemen, I swear to you
That I am indeed unfortunate;
Never do I pause,
Here or anywhere else;
In good weather or bad
I march incessantly...”*

“We used to say *arreste*,” the Abbé observed, “in order to preserve the rhyme.ⁱ That proves the antiquity of the song.”

“I have good tobacco in my pipe which offers even better proof of the discovery of America!” said Galapian.

Joli-Coeur sang:

*“Isaac Laquedem
“The name given to me...”*

“Hold on,” the Abbé put in. “The true name is Ahasver or Ahasuerus.”
“Pardon me,” Fanchon objected, “but it’s definitely Isaac Laquedem...”

*“Born in Jerusalem,
“A very famous town...”*

“Matthew Paris,” Galapian said, “calls him Cartaphilus.”ⁱⁱ
“Schedt affirms,” the Abbé began, “that there was a certain Ozer, one of Herod’s soldiers—the same one who extended the sponge soaked in vinegar to our Divine Savior...”ⁱⁱⁱ
“George of Trebizond claims that one named Levy...”
“Schiaivone supposes...”
“El Edrisi infers...”
Meanwhile, Joli-Coeur sang, out of tune and at the top of his voice:

*“The very sky that surrounds me
“Is painful to me.
“I am going round the world
“For the hundredth time:
“Everyone dies in his turn,
“But I live forever!”*

Whereas Fanchon cooed:

*“I have no resources
“Neither home nor possessions,
“I have five sous in my purse
“That is all my worldly wealth;
“In every place and time
“I always have as much.”*

The little Touraineans repeated the refrain, while vying to put the dessert in their pockets. The unfortunate Vicomte Paul, deafened, covered his ears and called in vain for silence.

Suddenly, however, you might have heard a pin drop.

Vicomte Paul had asked:

“But where is Lotte?”

And everyone looked at the empty seat of the one who was called *the Wandering Jew’s daughter*—where they saw, in the place formerly occupied by the child, a fine cloud of vapor, completing its slow disappearance...

ⁱ The Abbé is referring to the last syllable of the third line, which is supposed to rhyme with the *proteste* at the end of the first. Many old French words including the intermediate formulation “*est*” contracted it in modern French to “*êt*” (*fenêtre* is the most familiar example). The version of the third line given by Féval ends in *arrête*—which is, indeed, a false rhyme.

ⁱⁱ Féval’s use of Matthew Paris’ name creates a gloss of scholarly authenticity that disguises the fabrication of all the names that follow, with the possible exception of Schedt, which might conceivably be a misrendering of the name of Johann Jacob Schudt (whose scholarly contribution to the history of the legend

was the notion that it was a symbolic representation of the plight of the Jewish people in the wake of the diaspora). Féval's reference to a scholar named Schiavone is slightly odd, given that name would have been familiar to some readers as the pseudonym of the 16th-century Italian painter Andrea Meldolla, but this is presumably a coincidence.

ⁱⁱⁱ As explained in the introduction, this reference is obviously to the version of the story coined by Marana, but I have retained Féval's spelling rather than substituting Marana's Ader because Féval's version of the character is very much his own invention.