

An Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel



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CHAPTER III Enmeshed

A fortnight later the whole of the little city of Moisson was in a ferment owing to the arrest of one of its most respected tradesmen, Citizen Deszeze, who, anyone would have thought, was absolutely above suspicion, had been put to the indignity of a summary requisition in his house. He had protested—as was only natural under the circumstances—and in consequence of this moderate protest he had been dragged before the chief of section at Mantes and had to submit to a most rigorous and most humiliating interrogatory. Nay more! He was detained for two whole days, while his invalid wife and pretty little daughter were well-nigh distraught with anxiety.

Then, on the top of that, there followed another requisition; just as if anyone could suspect the Deszeze family of treason against their country. They certainly had never been hotly in favor of the extreme measures taken by the revolutionary government—such as the execution of the erstwhile king and of Marie Antoinette, of deviant queen of France—but Citizen Deszeze had always abstained from politics. He had been wont to say that God, not men, ruled the destinies of countries, and that no doubt what was happening on these days in France occurred by the will of God, or they could never occur at all. He for his part was content to sell good vintage wines from Macon or Nuits, just as his father had done before him, and his grandfather before that, for the house of Deszeze, wine merchants of Moisson, in the department of Seine et Oise, had been established for three generations and more, and had always been a pattern of commercial integrity and lofty patriotism.

And now these requisitions! These detentions! And finally the arrest, not only of good Citizen Deszeze himself but of his invalid wife and pretty little daughter. If one dared, one would protest, call a meeting, anything. It was almost unbelievable, so unexpected was it. What had the Deszeze family done? No one knew. Inquiries at the commissariat of the section elicited no information. There were vague rumors that the poor invalid citizeness had always remained pious. She had been taught piety by her parents, no doubt, and had been brought up in a convent school besides. But what would you? Piety was reckoned a sin these days, and who would dare protest?

The servants at the substantial house inhabited by the Deszeze family were speechless with tears. The requisitions, and then the arrest, had come as a thunderbolt. And now they were all under orders to quit the house, for it would be shut up and ultimately sold for the benefit of the state. Oh, these were terrible times!

The same tragedy had occurred not far away from Moisson in the case of the Tournon-d'Agenais, whom no one was allowed to call come and comte these days. They, too, had been summarily arrested, and were being dragged to Paris for their trial when by some unforeseen miracle, they had been rescued and conveyed in safety to England. No one knew how, nor who the gallant rescuers were; but rumors were rife and some were wild. The superstitious believed in direct divine interference, though they dared not say this openly; but in their hearts they prayed that God might interfere in the same way on behalf of good Citizen Deszeze and his family.

Poor Hector Deszeze himself had not much hope on that score. He was a pious man, it is true, but his piety consisted in resignation to the will of God. Nor would he have cared much if God had only chosen to strike at him; it was the fate of his invalid wife that wrung his heart, and the future of his young daughter that terrified him. He had known the citizen commissary practically all his life. Lauzet was not a bad man, really. Perhaps he had got his head rather turned through his rapid accession from his original situation as packer in the Deszeze house of business, with a bed underneath the counter in the back shop, to that of chief of section in the rural division of the department of Seine et Oise, with an official residence in Mantes, a highly important post, considering its proximity to Paris. But all the same, Lauzet was not a bad man, and must have kept some gratitude in his heart for all the kindness shown to him by the Deszeze family when he was a lad in their employ.

But in spite of every appeal Lauzet remained stony hearted. "If I did anything for you, citizen, on my own responsibility," he said to Deszeze during the course of an interrogatory, "I should not only lose my position but probably my head into the bargain. I have no ill will toward

you, but I am not prepared to take such a risk on your behalf." "But my poor wife," Deszeze protested, putting his pride in his pocket and stooping to appeal to the man who had once been a mentor in his pay. "She is almost bedridden now and has not long to live. Could you not exercise some benevolent authority for her sake?" Lauzet shook his head. "Impossible," he said decisively. "And my daughter," moaned the distracted father, "my little Madeleine is not yet thirteen. What will be her fate? My God, Lauzet! Have you no bowels of compassion? Have you not got a daughter of your own?" "I have," Lauzet retorted curtly, "and therefore I have taken special care to keep on the right side of the government and never to express an opinion on anything that is done for the good of the state. And I should advise you, Citizen Deszeze, to do likewise, so that you may earn for yourself and your family some measure of mercy for your transgressions."

And with this grandiloquent phrase Lauzet indicated that the interview was now at an end. He also ordered the prisoner to be taken back to Moisson, and there to be kept in the cells until the following day, when arrangements would be complete for conveying the Deszeze family under escort to Paris.

The following day was market day in Moisson, and at first Lauzet had been doubtful whether it would not be best to wait another twenty-four hours before carrying through his friend Chauvelli's project. The dawn, however, broke with ideal conditions for it; a leaden sky, a tearing wind, and torrents of rain alternating with a thin drizzle. On the whole, nature had ranged herself on the side of all those who worked their nefarious deeds under cover of semi-darkness. Lauzet, gazing out on the gloomy autumnal aspect of weather and sky, felt that if the Scarlet Pimpernel did indeed meditate mischief he would choose such a day as this.

Thus it was that in the early dawn of this market day, the citizens of Moisson had a sad scene to witness. Soon after seven o'clock a small crowd collected round the big, old-fashioned dilapidated house in the Rue des Pipots. To right and left of the vehicle were soldiers on horseback, two on each side, mounting guard, and the man who held the reins was also in the uniform of the rural gendarmierie. Every one in the city knew this man, Charles Marie was his name, and he had begun life as a baker's assistant—a weak, anemic looking youth, who had been sent out of the army because he was no use as a fighting man, so timorous and slow witted was he.

Lately he had obtained a position as hostler at the posting inn in Mantes, because, it seems, he did know something about horses; but why he should be chosen to drive the dilapidated carriage to Paris today nobody could conjecture. He must have had a friend in high places to be so exalted above his capabilities. Anyway, there he sat on the box, looking neither to right nor left but straight between the ears of his off-leader, and not a word would he say in response to the questions, the jeers, and the taunts which came to him from his friends in the crowd.

Soon, however, excitement centered round the porte-cochere of the Deszeze house. It had suddenly been thrown wide open, and in the doorway appeared poor Citizen Deszeze, escorted by two officers of gendarmierie, and closely followed by Madeleine, her little daughter, also under guard. It was pitiable to see the poor invalid, who could scarcely stand on her half-paralyzed limbs, thus being dragged away from the home where she had lived as a happy wife and mother for close on a quarter of a century. A murmur of sympathy for these two women, and of execration for the brutality of this arrest, rose from the crowd. But it was quickly enough suppressed. Who would dare murmur openly these days, when spies of the revolutionary government lurked at every corner?

Hostile glances, however, were shot at Citizen Lauzet, who had come over that morning from Mantes and now stood by, somewhat detached from the crowd, watching the proceedings in the company of his friend Chauvelli.

"Is this in accordance with your idea?" he asked in a whisper when, presently, Chauvelli completed a quick

and comprehensive examination of the diligence. Chauvelli's only reply was a curt and peremptory "Hush!" and a furtive glance about him to see that there were no likely eavesdroppers within hearing. He knew from experience that the famous League of the Scarlet Pimpernel also had spies lurking in every corner; spies not so numerous, perhaps, as those in the pay of the committee of public safety, but a great deal more astute, and he also knew—none better—that the case of the Deszeze family was just one that would appeal to the sporting or chivalrous instincts of that band of English adventurers.

But he was satisfied with the misecense organized, under his supervision, by Chief of Section Lauzet. Prominence had been given all over the department to the arrest of the Deszeze family, to the worth and integrity of his head, the sickness of the wife, the charm and modesty of the daughter. Half a dozen picked men of the gendarmierie of Mantes, armed to the teeth, would join the diligence at Mantes, but they would ride inside disguised as passengers, whilst it was left for anybody to see that the coach was traveling under a feeble guard of four men, an officer, and three troopers, and was driven by a lout who was known to have no fight in him.

CHAPTER IV
The Road to Death
Lauzet had been inspired when he chose this day; a typical day in late October, with that pitiless rain lashed by a southeasterly wind that would score the roads and fret the horses. Down in the forest the diligence would have to go almost at foot pace, for the outline of every tree on the roadside would be blurred, and objects would loom like ghosts out of the mist.

Yes! The scene was set for the comedy invented by Chauvelli for the capture of his arch enemy. It only remained for the principal actors to play their roles to his satisfaction. Already the female prisoners had been hustled into the diligence amidst the sighs and tears of their sympathizers in the crowd. Poor Madam Deszeze had sunk back, fainting with exhaustion into the arms of her young daughter, and the two women sat huddled together, the extreme order of the vehicle, more dead than alive. And now, amidst much jolting and creaking, some shouting and cursing, too, with cracking of whip and jingling of spurs, the awkward lumbering diligence was started on its way. Some two hundred meters farther on it came to a halt once more, outside the commissariat, and here the male prisoners, Citizen Deszeze himself, were made to join his family to the diligence.

Resigned to his own fate, he set himself the task of making the painful journey as endurable as may be to his invalid wife. Hardly realizing yet the extent of their misfortune and the imminence of their doom, the three victims of Lauzet's cupidity and Chauvelli's vengefulness suffered their martyrdom in silence and with resignation.

The final start from Moisson had been made at eight o'clock. By this time the small city was filling with the neighboring farmers and drovers, with their cattle and their carts and vehicles of every kind, all tending either to the Place du Marche or to the various taverns for refreshment. Lauzet, accompanied by Chauvelli, had ridden back to Mantes. Just before nine o'clock the diligence rattled over the cobblestones of that city, and a halt was called at the posting inn. It was part of the program to spend some hours in Mantes, where the extra men of the gendarmierie would be picked up, and only to make a fresh start when the shades of evening were beginning to draw in. It was not to be supposed that the English brigands would launch their attack in broad daylight, and the weather did not look as if it were going to mend.

Chauvelli, of course, was there, seeing to every arrangement, with his friend Lauzet close at his elbow. He had himself picked out the six men of the gendarmierie who were to ride in disguise inside the diligence; he had inspected their disguises, added an artistic or realistic touch here and there, before he pronounced them to be good.

Finally he turned to the young officer who was in command of the party. "Now," he said very earnestly to him, "you know just what you are going to do? You realize the importance of the mission which is being intrusted to you?" The officer nodded in reply. He was a young man and ambitious. The task which had been allotted to him had fired his enthusiasm. Indeed, in these days, the capture of that elusive English spy known as the Scarlet Pimpernel was a goal for which every young officer of gendarmierie was wont to strive; not only because of the substantial monetary reward in prospect, but because of the glory attached to the destruction of so bitter an enemy of revolutionary France.

"I will tell you, citizen," the young man said to Chauvelli, "how I have finally made my plans, and you shall tell me if you approve. About a kilometer and a half before the road emerges out of the wood, the ground rises gradually, and there are one or two sharp bends in the road until it reaches the crest of the hill. That part of the forest is very lonely, and at a point just before the ground begins to rise I intend to push my mount on for a meter or two ahead of the men, and pretend to examine the lead of the team. After a while I will call 'halt' and make as if I thought there was something wrong with the

traces. The driver is such a lout that he and I will embark on a long argument as to what he should do to remedy the defect, and in the course of the argument I will contrive to slip a small piece of flint which I have in my pocket under the hoof of one of the coach horses." "You don't think one of your men will see you doing that—and perhaps wonder?" "Oh, I can be careful. It is done in a moment. Then we shall get on the road again, and five minutes later that same coach horse will be dead lame. Another halt for examination, this time near the crest of the hill. The lout of a driver will never discover what is amiss. I shall make as if the hurt was serious, and set myself the task of tending it. I thought then, subject to your approval, of ordering the troopers to dismount. I have provided them with good wine and certain special rations in their knapsacks. At a word from me they will rest on the roadside, seemingly heedless and unconcerned, but really very wide awake and keen on the job. The diligence will be while he is at a standstill, with doors shut and curtains closely drawn, but the six men whom we have stowed inside the coach are kept on their toes, well armed and, like hungry wolves, eager to get their teeth into the enemies of France. They will be on the alert, their hands on their pistols, ready to spring up and out of the coach at the first sign of an attack. Now, what think you of that setting, citizen," the young officer concluded, "for luring the English spies into a fight? Their methods are usually furtive, but this time they will have to meet us in a hand-to-hand combat, and, if they fall into our trap, I know that we can deal with them."

"I can but pronounce your plan admirable, citizen captain," Chauvelli replied approvingly. "You have my best wishes for your success. In the meanwhile citizen Lauzet and I will be anxiously waiting for news. We'll make a start soon after you, and strike the bridge path through the forest. This gives us a short cut which will bring us to Epone just in time to hear your news. If you have been attacked, send me a courier as soon as you have had time to gagged inside your coach." "I will not fail you, citizen," the young captain rejoined eagerly.

Lauzet, who had stood by, anxious and silent, whilst this colloquy was going on, shrugged his shoulders with a show of philosophy. "And at worst," he said, "if that meddling Scarlet Pimpernel should think prudent the better part of valor, if he should scent a trap and carefully avoid it, we would always have the satisfaction of sending the Deszeze family to the guillotine."

"The English spies," Chauvelli rejoined dryly, "will not scent a trap, nor will they give up the attempt to rescue the Deszeze family. This is just a case to rouse their ire against us, and if it prove successful, one to flatter their vanity and redound to their credit in their own country. No," he went on thoughtfully, "I have no fear that the Scarlet Pimpernel will evade us this time. He will attack, I know. The only question is, when he commands which might come now at any moment."

"With the half-dozen excellent men whom I have picked up here in Mantes," the young officer retorted. "I shall have nine under my command, and we are prepared for the attack. It is the English spies who will be surprised, we who will hold the advantage, even as to numbers, for the Scarlet Pimpernel can only work with two or three followers, and we shall outnumber them three to one."

"Then good luck attend you, citizen captain," Chauvelli said at last. "You are in a fair way of rendering your country a signal service; see that you let not fame and fortune evade you in the end. Remember that you will have to deal with one of the most astute as well as most daring adventurers of our times, who has baffled men that were cleverer and at least as ambitious as yourself. Stay," the Terrorist added, and placed his thin, claw-like hand as if in warning on the other man's arm. "It is impossible, even for me who knows him as he is and who has seen him in scores of disguises, to give you any accurate description of his personality; but one thing you can bear in mind; it is that he is tall above the average; is that he is an Englishman, and his height is the one thing about him that he cannot disguise. So beware of every man who is taller than yourself, citizen captain, however innocent he may appear, take the precaution to detain him. Mistrust every tall man, for one of them is of a surety the Scarlet Pimpernel."

He finally reminded the young captain to send him a courier with the welcome news as soon as possible. "Citizen Lauzet and I," he concluded, "will ride by the bridge path and await you at Epone. I shall be devoured with anxiety until I hear from you."

The men were not nervous, not at first. They were merely excited, knowing what awaited them, both during the journey and afterward by way of reward. If they were successful there would be for every man engaged in the undertaking a sufficiency to provide for himself and his family for the rest of his life. The capture of the Scarlet Pimpernel! Half a dozen magic words in truth, and they had spurred Citizen Captain Raffet and his squad with boundless enthusiasm. They felt no discomfort either from tearing wind or driving rain. With eyes fixed before them they rode on, striving to pierce the mist-laden distance where the enemy of France was even now lurking, intent on that adventure which would be his last.

It was long past five o'clock when the diligence with its escort reached the edge of the forest. What little daylight there had been all afternoon was already beginning to wane; the sky was of a leaden color, heavily laden with rain clouds, save way behind in the west, where a few fiery, crimson streaks cut through the clouds like sharp incisions, there where the setting sun still lingered in the autumn sky.

The men now were keenly on the alert, their eyes searching the dim light that glimmered through the forest trees, their ears attuned to the slightest sound that rose above the patter of their horses' hoofs or the grinding of the coach wheels over the muddy road. The forest between Mezeres and Epone is four kilometers long; the road which intersects it plunges down into the valley and then rises up again with one or two sharp bends to the crest of the hill, after which, within the space of two hundred yards, the forest trees quickly become sparse and the open country lies spread out like a map with, on the right, the ribbon of the Seine winding its way along to St. Germain and Paris.

It was in the forest that the enemy would lurk. Out in the open he would find no cover, and could be sighted a couple of kilometers all around and more, if he attempted one of his audacious tricks. The light, which became more and more fitful as the sun sank lower in the west, made observation difficult; the road looked like a dark, impenetrable wall, from behind which, mayhap, dozens of pairs of eyes were peering, ready to attack. The men who were riding by the side of the coach felt queer sensations at the roots of their hair; their hands, moist and hot, clung convulsively to the reins, and the glances which they cast about them became furtive and laden with fear.

But those who were inside the diligence had no superstitious terrors to contend with. The aristos were huddled up together in the far corner of the vehicle and the men had spread themselves out, three a side, as comfortably as they could. A couple of bottles of excellent wine had been welcome supplement to their rations and put additional heart into them. One of them had produced a pack of greasy, well-worn cards from his pocket with which to while away the time.

A quarter of an hour later the captain in command called a halt; the jolting vehicle came to a standstill with a jerk, and there was much scrambling and creaking and jingling, while the driver got down from his seat to see what was amiss. Nothing much, apparently, for a minute or two later the diligence was once more on its way. But only for a brief period. Soon there was an appreciable slackening of speed, then a halt. More shouting and swearing, creaking and scrambling. The men inside marvelled what was amiss. It was as much as their life was worth to put their heads out of the window or even to draw one of the tattered blinds to one side in order to peep. But they quickly put cards and wine away; it was better to be prepared for the word of command which might come now at any moment.

They strained their ears to listen and, one by one, a word or two, a movement, a sound, told them what was happening. Their comrades outside were ordered to dismount, to take it easy, to sit down by the roadside and rest. It seems one of the draft horses had gone lame. The men who were inside sighed with a longing for rest, too, a desire to stretch their cramped limbs, but they did not murmur. They were waiting for the word of command that would release them from their inactivity. "Halt," then there was nothing to do but wait. No doubt this halt by the roadside was just a part of the great scheme for luring the English adventurers to the attack. Grimly and in silence the six picked men inside the coach drew their pistols from their wallets, saw that they were primed and in order, then laid them across their knees with their fingers on the triggers, in readiness for the Englishmen when they came.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)
Prevent White Scours
White scours in new born calves is a disease likely to cling to certain premises or herds. Outbreaks frequently destroy practically every calf born. It is caused by various varieties of the colon bacillus and allied microbic species. Most of those ordinarily are harmless inhabitants of the intestines of the older animals. What causes them to go on a calf killing rampage is not known at all.

Feeding Young Calf
The young calf usually will take about six to ten pounds of skim milk daily, which is increased gradually to sixteen to twenty pounds by the time the calf is four months old. In addition, a little grain and some legume hay is provided. During this time cleanliness of feed and surroundings are of great importance. If it is possible to have each calf tied separately, the amount of feed can be regulated better and the feeder can watch the condition of each calf.

Always Content
We shall be made truly wise if we be made content; content, too, not only with what we understand, but content with what we do not understand—the habit of mind which theologians call, and rightly, faith in God.—Charles Kingsley.



SILAGE IS MOST ECONOMICAL FEED

Every dairy farmer worthy of the name should have a silo, because dairying is rarely, if ever, profitable in these days without one. However, whenever a farmer contemplates the purchase of a silo, first of all he considers the advantages that are likely to accrue from its use, also any disadvantages. Certainly the only disadvantage is the first cost of the silo, which is not so great as either, considering the length of its service a good substantial silo will give.

Farmers on every hand are beginning to realize the many good sound reasons for feeding silage. In all my experience, I have not talked to a single farmer who was displeased with his silo, with one exception, and in that instance it was a home-made affair and not large enough, writes H. W. Swope in the Indiana Farmer's Guide. That farmer today has two silos on his farm, is a successful feeder, farmer, and a good business man as well.

Silage is the most economical feed that can be produced for dairy cattle, and corn is without question the best crop to grow for silage. It is the writer's experience that where a farmer has eight to ten cows and sufficient tillable ground to grow corn, a silo will without question be a source of profit to that farmer, regardless of his location. In order to make dairying successful it is necessary to have a silo to furnish feed all the year round. Silage also makes any farm more productive where it is used. One of the reasons I have found a silo to be profitable, aside from the feeding value of silage, is that more silo material can be grown on a given acreage and put into the silo cheaper than if it were harvested and fed dry. No other feed can compare with silage in succulence and palatability. The dairy cow that is fed silage will keep up her flow of milk and be more profitable than from any other method of feeding.

Corn Has Surely Proven Most Economical Grain

The results of experiments of the different experiment stations in feeding cattle on pasture indicate that the pasture should be supplemented with grain in maintaining the appetite and in securing satisfactory gains during the last stages of the feeding period. These experiments have shown that it is profitable to feed grain during the first part of the feeding period when cattle are on pasture.

Corn has proven the most economical grain to feed as a supplement while cattle are on good pasture. Since pasture grass is very high in protein, it has not proven so profitable to feed high protein concentrates such as linseed meal or cottonseed meal, although cattle that received linseed meal did a better finish than those that did not receive it in the ration. This is not always true if cottonseed meal is fed instead of linseed meal.

Producers Responsible for Dairy Cleanliness

Inasmuch as the producers of the milk and cream are responsible for the quality of the finished product in a large measure, they are the ones who must be appealed to and made to see the importance of cleanliness in everything connected with the production and handling of milk. Clean barns, clean cows, clean milk utensils, clean milkers, all are very important. Despite the most careful methods in the matter of cleanliness, some bacteria will get into the milk, hence the milk should be cooled and kept cool as soon as possible to check the growth of the bacteria which have gained entrance into the milk or cream. In this connection it is well to remember that bacteria double in number in every half-hour when the milk is kept at a favorable temperature, which is from 70 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Dairy Notes

Dry pastures make mighty little milk. Supplement them with some green corn or sorghum.
Fix a box where the young calves can have some grain and hay. It is surprising how quickly they can eat it.
When feed is not plentiful, as is the case in some localities this year, the boarder cow, masquerading as a milk cow, is an even greater liability than usual.
Give the new-born calf a quart of milk three times daily at the start.
The use of silage in feeding dairy cows through the summer is increasing and will continue to do so as its value in dry pasture seasons is better appreciated.

In raising the dairy calf leave the calf with the cow for one or two days and then take it away and feed from eight to ten pounds of warm milk per day for about two weeks.



Hostile Glances Were Shot at Citizen Lauzet.