

# An Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel

The Baroness Orczy

WILL Service  
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## CHAPTER VII

### The Catchers Caught

Raffet, in the meanwhile, had called one of the men of the gendarmierie to him. "Ride, citizen soldier!" he commanded, "as fast as you can to Epone. You will find the citizen commissary and his friend from Paris at the post inn. Tell them just what has occurred and that I am sending the pack



The Courier Had Ridden Away.

of miscreants back to Mantes for punishment. Tell them also that this senseless piece of folly has not left us unprepared for attack by the English spies, though we have not much more hope in that direction now. We shall be on the road again in a quarter of an hour, but will have to walk the horses practically all the way, so do not expect to be in Epone for another two hours at the least."

Comparative silence fell upon the scene, where a brief while ago deafening shouts and tumultuous melees had roused the woodland echoes. Only the prisoners now were heard groaning and cursing. The courier had ridden away bearing the unwelcome news to Lauzet and his friend from Paris; the men who were not busy with the prisoners were looking to their horses or their accoutrements, while Raffet stood by, observant and grim. And suddenly, right out of the darkness, there came the sound of agonizing calls for help.

"What was that?" Raffet queried, straining his ears to listen.

"Help! Help!" came from the distance. And then again, "Help! Hi!" and "Curse you, why don't you come?" And with it all the now familiar sound of men fighting and shouting. Not so very far away, either. A couple of hundred meters perhaps, just the other side of the bend. Were it not for the thicket and the darkness, a man could cut his way through to where those shouts came from in a couple of minutes.

"Help! Help!"

One of the prisoners broke into a harsh laugh. "It's Citizen Lauzet, I'll wager," he said, "and his friend from Paris."

"Citizen Lauzet?" Raffet exclaimed. "What in—do you mean?"

"Well!" Paul, the washerwoman's son, replied, still laughing and forgetting his sorry plight in the excellence of the joke. "We found those two ambling on the bridge path, on their way to Epone, ready, no doubt, to seize the largest share of reward for the capture of the Scarlet Pimpernel."

"Great God!"

"And so we seized them both," Francois the mercer rejoined, "and did to them what you are doing now to us; gave them a good hiding, then bound them together with ropes and threw them in the bottom of the cart."

"Name of a dog!"

"And no doubt," came a high-pitched voice from among the group of prisoners, "the English spies have found them and—"

"Malediction!" But Raffet got no further. Astonishment not unmixed with terror rendered him speechless. The Scarlet Pimpernel! Ye Gods! And the chief of section and his friend at the mercy of that fiend! Even now, his straining ears seemed to perceive through those calls for help a triumphant battle cry in a barbaric tongue.

"Here!" he cried to the troopers. "Two of you are sufficient to bring these rascals along; and you, corporal, and two men come with me. Citizen Lauzet and his friends are being murdered even now."

He hurried down the road followed by the corporal and two men of the

gendarmierie, while those that were left behind saw to it that the perpetrators of all this additional outrage and of all this pother were duly started on their way.

To them Raffet shouted a final: "Three of you remain to guard the prisoners and make ready for an immediate start when we return." Then he disappeared round the bend in the road.

The shouting had ceased as Raffet and his troopers hurried along. Indeed, at first he might have thought that his ears had deceived him, had not that agonized call for help still risen insistently through the gloom. He searched the darkness, and suddenly a sight greeted him by the roadside which caused the hairs to stand up on his head. At first this seemed nothing but a bundle lying half in and half out of the ditch in the mud, with the drip-drip from the trees making a slimy puddle around it. It was from this bundle that the calls for help and the curses proceeded.

It was appalling! Almost unbelievable for there were the chief of section in the rural division of the department of Seine et Oise, Citizen Lauzet, and his friend from Paris whom Captain Raffet knew as Citizen Chauvelin, a man who stood high in the estimation of the government, and they were lying in a muddy puddle in the ditch like a pair of calves tied together for market. Raffet might have disbelieved his eyes, had it not been for the language which Citizen Lauzet used all the while that the rope which bound him was being cut by the corporal.

"Thank the Lord," Raffet exclaimed fervently, "that you are safe!"

"I'll have 'em flayed alive, the rascals!" Lauzet exclaimed in a voice rendered feeble and hoarse with much shouting, as well as with rage. "The guillotine is too mild a death for such miscreants. They attacked me, citizen captain, would you believe it? Me! Chief of section in the rural gendarmierie! Have you ever heard of such an outrage? They shouted at us from behind. My friend and I were riding along quite slowly, and we had just turned into the bridge path from the road. We heard the cart and all the shouting, but we thought that they were just a pack of drunken oncs returning from market. So we paid no heed; not even when we heard that on the road the cart had drawn up and, chancing to glance back at the moment, I saw those louts jumping better skelter out of the cart. And the next moment they were on us, the lot of them. Ten or a dozen of them they were, the rogues!"

"The miserable scoundrels!" Raffet ejaculated fervently.

"They dragged us out of our saddles," Lauzet continued, "they beat us about the head."

"Name of a name!"

"And all the while they kept on shouting, 'Traitor! Traitor! Give up the English spy to us.' In vain did

we cry and protest. They would not hear us, and what could we do against a dozen of them? Then finally they bound us with ropes, wound our cravats about our mouths so that we could scarcely breathe, and lifted us into that jolting cart, where we lay more dead than alive while it was driven by a lout at breakneck speed."

"Have no fear, citizen," Raffet put in forcefully, "their punishment shall be exemplary."

"I have no fear," Lauzet retorted dryly, "for I'll see to their punishment myself. The scamps, the limbs of Satan! But I'll teach them! There we lay, citizen captain, at the bottom of the cart, my friend Citizen Chauvelin, who wore the tricolor scarf of office around his middle, and I, chief commissary of the district, and those ruffians actually dared to wipe their shoes on us! So we drove for a kilometer and a half through the forest. Then presently the cart drew up and all these louts jumped down like a pack of puppies and ran away up the hill with shouts that would wake the dead. The last I remember, for in the jolting and my cramped position I had partly lost consciousness, was that my friend and I were lifted out of the cart as unceremoniously as we had been thrust into it. We were then thrown into the ditch by the roadside, in the mud, just where you ultimately found us, and our cravats were loosened from round our mouths."

Immediately we started screaming for help, but there was such a din going on up the road that we felt the sound of our voices could not possibly reach you. Fortunately in the end, you did hear us, or maybe we should have perished of cold and inanition."

"Malediction!" Raffet swore viciously. "And you might have been attacked by those cursed English spies while you lay helpless here. We thought we heard them, and their battle cry, and hurried to your assistance."

Chauvelin showed no emotion. As soon as the rope that held him had been severed he had sat up on a broken tree stump, staring straight out before him into the mist, and meditatively stroking his sore wrists and arms.

When first those abominable louts had thrust him and Lauzet in the bottom of the cart and he lay there bound and gagged, nursing his stupendous wrath and hopes of revenge, he had become aware that the driver, who still sat aloft just above him, had suddenly turned and, leaning over, had peered into his face. It had only been a brief glance; the next moment the man was sitting up quite straight again, and all that Chauvelin saw of him was his back, with the great breadth of shoulders and a general look of power and tenacity. But it was the brief vision of that glance that Chauvelin now was striving to

recapture. The blue-gray eyes with their heavy lids that could not be disguised, and the mocking glance which had seemed to him like rasping metal against his exacerbated nerves. And suddenly he called to Raffet, "The driver and the cart, where are they?"

## CHAPTER VIII

### Charles-Marie

The captain's sharp eyes searched the mist that was rising in the valley. "The driver seems to be on the box," he said. "I shall want him to drive these rascals back to Mantes."

"Send him to me at once," Chauvelin broke in curtly.

Raffet gave the necessary orders, although inwardly he chafed at this new delay. The prisoners slowly continued their way, and Chauvelin waited, expectant. For what? He could not have told you. He certainly did not expect to be brought face to face with his old enemy. And yet . . . But whatever vague hopes he might have entertained were dissipated soon enough by an exclamation from Raffet.

"Charles-Marie! What in a dog's name are you doing here?"

And a weak, querulous voice rose in reply. "He told me I was to run along and drive the cart back to Mantes for him. He—"

"He?" queried Raffet sharply.

"I don't know, Citizen Captain," replied Charles-Marie.

"Who ordered you to leave the diligence and your horses?"

"I don't know, Citizen Captain," protested the unfortunate Charles-Marie. "It's God's truth. I don't know."

"You must know why you are not sitting on the box of the diligence."

"Yes. I know that, for I scrambled down as soon as I saw Gaspard fall on you, Citizen Captain."

"Why did you scramble down?"

"Because the horses were restive. At the first pistol shot they started rearing and I had a mighty task to hold them. Fortunately, some one came and gave me a hand with them."

"What do you mean by 'some one' came? Who was it?"

"He was a drover from Aincourt, Citizen Captain, and so he knew all about horses; and how could I keep four terrified horses quiet all by myself?"

"All very well, Citizen Captain, but I never was a fighting man, and I didn't like those pistol shots all about me. One of them might have caught me, I say, and it was only right I should find cover somewhere, lest indeed I be hit by mistake."

"You abominable coward!" Raffet rejoined savagely. "But all that does not explain how you got here."

"Well, citizen, it was like this: The drover from Aincourt saw that I was not altogether happy, and he said to me, 'There'll be a lot more fighting presently, when the English spies come to attack.' I said nothing at first. All I could do was to groan, for, as I say, I'm not a fighting man. I went out of the army because I was too ill to fight, and my mother—"

"Never mind about your mother now. What happened after that?"

"He said to me, 'You go and get on the seat of the cart which is up the road. It is my cart. You can drive back to Mantes and leave it to my horses at the posting inn, where they know me. I'll look after these horses for you, and when the fighting's over I'll drive the diligence to Paris. No one will be any the wiser and I don't mind a bit of a fight. I can do a bit of fighting myself.' Well, Charles-Marie went on dolefully, 'there didn't seem much harm in that. I could see he knew all about horses from the way he handled them; but I'm no fighting man, and when I was engaged to drive the diligence from Mantes to Paris I was not told that there would be any fighting.'

"So you turned your back on the diligence, like a coward, and crept along here—"

"I didn't creep, citizen. I followed you when—"

"Pard!" Raffet broke in with an oath. "Another of you that will not escape punishment. If I had my way the guillotine would be busy in Mantes for days to come."

## CHAPTER IX

### Discomfiture

There was nothing for it now but to allow Charles-Marie to drive the cart back to Mantes, since its owner had probably seized an opportunity by now of taking to his heels. Poor Raffet was worn out with the excitement of the past half-hour, and bewildered with all the mystery that confronted him at every turn. Vaguely he felt that something sinister lurked behind this last incident related to him by Charles-Marie, but for the moment he did not connect it with the possible maneuvers of the English spies. He thought that chapter of the day's book of adventure closed. It would be an extraordinary piece of luck if in the end they should still come across the Scarlet Pimpernel.

Chauvelin had not waited to hear the whole of Charles-Marie's tale. Throughout all the adventures which had befallen him this day, he had seen the hand of his enemy, the Scarlet Pimpernel. Now he no longer had any doubt. Almost at the first words uttered by Charles-Marie he had jumped to his feet, all the stiffness gone out of his bones; and despite the darkness, the mud and the rain, he turned and ran up the muddy road, round the bend beyond which he had heard the fight a quarter of an hour ago. To Lauzet he had shouted a

curt, "Come!" and Lauzet had followed, obedient, understanding like a dog, only vaguely scenting danger to himself, danger more serious than any that had threatened him during this eventful day.

Chauvelin ran through the darkness with Lauzet at his heels. Despite the cold and rawness of the mist, he was in a bath of perspiration; though his veins were on fire, his teeth chattered with the cold. Lauzet, behind him, was panting like an apoplectic seal. Soon he fell with a groan by the roadside. But Chauvelin did not give in. Stumbling, half dazed, he went round the bend of the road; then he too fell, exhausted, by the roadside, exhausted and trembling as with ague.

The scene which greeted his aching eyes had finally unnerved him. There, on the crest of the hill, he saw three horses tethered to neighboring trees, and beside the horses, bound to the same trees, three soldiers with their hats pulled down over their eyes. Of the diligence there was not a sign. Chauvelin stared and stared at this scene. He had not strength enough to rise, though his every nerve ached to go up to one of those plumed figures by the trees and to ask what had happened.

Thus Raffet found him five or ten minutes later. He came with his soldiers and a lantern or two. Chauvelin could not do more at first than point with trembling finger straight out before him, and Raffet and the men swinging their lanterns came on the spectacle of the three men and the three horses tied to the forest trees, the animals, calm as horses are wont to be when nature and men are silent around them; the men inert and half-conscious.

"Question them, Citizen Captain," Chauvelin commanded feebly.

The men's statements, however, were somewhat vague. It seems that after their comrades had gone off, some with their captives, others with the prisoners, the three who were left behind busied themselves at first with their horses, examining the saddle girths and so on, when one of them noticed something moving underneath the diligence.

"It was getting dark by that time," the man explained. "However, I called to my mates, and we stooped to see what it was. We were much surprised, you may be sure, to see two pairs of feet in ragged shoes. We seized hold of them and pulled. The feet were attached to two pairs of legs in tattered stockings and breeches. Finally they emerged from underneath the diligence two ragamuffins with mud up to their eyes and their clothing in rags."

"They were a sorry looking pair. We put them down for two potholes, not worth powder and shot, and were just wondering what we should do with them when suddenly, without the slightest warning, they turned on us like a couple of demons. Not they only, for a third fellow seemed to have sprung out of the earth behind us, and come to their aid. A giant he was."

"A giant?" Raffet exclaimed, for he had suddenly remembered Citizen Chauvelin's warning about the English spy who was tall above the average.

"Aye! A giant, with the strength of an ox."

No one said anything more for the moment. There was, indeed, nothing

of young louts into the belief that they were being cheated out of the reward due to them by the capture of the noted English adventurer in their district. Full of enthusiasm and excellent wine, they came on the chief of section, who, I imagine, answers to our chief constable of a county, together with a gentleman from Paris whom some of us have known in the past. Well, the young louts, eager for the fray, and always egged on by the drover from Aincourt, seized and garrotted those worthy gentlemen and, throwing them into the cart, took them along with them. In the forest of Mezieres they came upon the diligence, in which were our little friend Madeleine and her parents. The vehicle was ostensibly guarded by four troopers only, but our Scarlet Pimpernel and his friends had already ascertained that as a matter of fact there were half a dozen more men inside the coach, and that all were armed to the teeth. Altogether too many for three men to tackle; and since the chief motto of our band of heroes is never to attempt where they cannot succeed, stratagem had here to come to the aid of valor."

"And what did they do?" one of the ladies queried breathlessly.

"The drover from Aincourt, our gallant Scarlet Pimpernel, his highness replied, 'brought' the cart to a standstill about half a mile from the crest of the hill where the diligence had come to a halt prepared for an attack. Then he allowed the louts to rush the vehicle, and a general melee ensued. But he and his two followers in the meantime lifted the chief of section and his friend out of the cart and carried them up the road to a point from which their call for help would presently be heard. Here they left them in the ditch, but carefully took the gags from their mouths."

"Immediately the two worthy gentlemen started to shout. Nor could they be blamed for their plight was indeed pitiable. At first there was so much din in the melee at the top of the hill that their cries could not be heard. And in the meanwhile one of our gallant heroes had crept up through the thicket to the crest of the hill. Then presently the fighting ceased. The enthusiastic captain of gendarmierie heard the cries for help, accompanied by a good deal of shouting and clash of metal carried on by the Scarlet Pimpernel himself and his second follower. Now do you see what was the result of this maneuver?"

"No! No!" the ladies exclaimed. And the men, no less enthusiastic and interested, cried, "Will your highness proceed?"

"The prisoners let out the secret that the chief of section and his friend were living horses."

"To say. Reproaches and vituperations would come later; punishment, too, perhaps. The soldiers and their captain hung their heads, brooding and ashamed."

"Epone is not more than four kilometers, citizen," Raffet at last ventured to suggest, "and we have the lanterns."

And so the procession started, trudging down the incline in the darkness and the rain; Chauvelin and Lauzet, Raffet and his corporal with a couple of troopers carrying the lanterns. Two hours later they reached Epone, hungry, tired, splattered with mud up to their thighs.

At Epone Raffet's courier lost no time in recounting at full length the adventures that had befallen him and his comrades. Thus the story was all over the district by the time the laborers of Epone had gone to their work the following morning, and the chief of section in the department of Seine et Oise, Citizen Lauzet, became the laughing stock of the countryside, together with his wonderful friend from Paris. Late that same day a horseless diligence, which at first ap-

peared deserted derelict, was discovered half a dozen kilometers to the north of the forest of Mezieres, in the mud of the stream that runs southward into the Seine. A group of laborers going to their work were the first to see it. It had been dragged into the stream and left axle deep in the water behind a clump of tall reeds. The laborers reported their find to a patrol of Raffet's troopers, whom he had sent out to scour the countryside. The wheels had sunk deep into the mire, and it was only after a great deal of exertion that laborers and soldiers together succeeded in dragging the coach over the flat bank upon firm land.

"Truly, fate has been against us," Lauzet sighed dolefully. "Satan alone knows where the English spies and the prisoners are at this hour."

"Well on their way to England," Chauvelin remarked. "I know 'em. With their long purses and their impudence, they'll work their way to the coast, aided by fools and traitors. Such fools and traitors," he added under his breath, "as helped them last night in their latest adventure."

## CHAPTER X

### "Fie, Sir Percy!"

Little Madeleine Deseeze was very shy. She had been brought by her father to pay her respects to Monseigneur le Prince de Galles because maman was too ill to accompany her.

"I don't remember much, monseigneur," Madeleine said shyly. "Maman and I were too frightened to notice anything. There was so much shouting and fighting. It was terrible."

"Shall I tell you what happened, little one?" his royal highness was pleased to say.

"Your highness, steaming punch is served in the yellow drawing room," a pleasant voice interposed, with the assurance of privilege.

"Fie, Sir Percy!" exclaimed pretty Lady Alicia Nugget, "would you spoil his highness' story?"

"Rather than let that good punch spoil with cooling, dear lady," Sir Percy retorted with a smile.

"Selize him and garrotte him," his highness broke in with a laugh, "as our gallant hero and his friends seized and garrotted a chief of section, whatever that may be, and his powerful friend from Paris."

"Selize him! Garrotte him!" cried many a pair of charmingly rouged lips.

The next moment Sir Percy Blakeney, that prince of dandies, saw himself fettered by a number of lovely arms, while gay voices chirruping like birds cried, "The story, your highness, we entreat! He cannot interrupt now."

"I have the story from one who knows," his highness resumed with a smile, "and our little friend Madeleine shall hear it. It was thus. Our gallant Scarlet Pimpernel, in one of his happiest disguises as a drover from Aincourt, did, with the aid of two of his followers, egg on a number

of young louts into the belief that they were being cheated out of the reward due to them by the capture of the noted English adventurer in their district. Full of enthusiasm and excellent wine, they came on the chief of section, who, I imagine, answers to our chief constable of a county, together with a gentleman from Paris whom some of us have known in the past. Well, the young louts, eager for the fray, and always egged on by the drover from Aincourt, seized and garrotted those worthy gentlemen and, throwing them into the cart, took them along with them. In the forest of Mezieres they came upon the diligence, in which were our little friend Madeleine and her parents. The vehicle was ostensibly guarded by four troopers only, but our Scarlet Pimpernel and his friends had already ascertained that as a matter of fact there were half a dozen more men inside the coach, and that all were armed to the teeth. Altogether too many for three men to tackle; and since the chief motto of our band of heroes is never to attempt where they cannot succeed, stratagem had here to come to the aid of valor."

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ditch, while one of our heroes—one who had gone back to the scene of the fight and mingled with the crowd—was able to put in a word that no doubt those two great and worthy citizens were being attacked and murdered by the English spies. The English spies! You have no conception, ladies, what magic lies in those three words for every soldier of the republic. They mean hopes of promotion and of big monetary reward. In an instant the enthusiastic captain had called to some of his men to follow him, to go to the rescue of their chief of section, and incidentally to capture the Scarlet Pimpernel."

"And that was the immediate outcome of the clever stratagem. The captain divided his forces. Three he took with him, two were left to bring the prisoners along, another had been sent as courier with a message. Three only were left to guard the diligence. The gallant Scarlet Pimpernel had made a clever calculation. Already by a small ruse he had rid himself of the cart. Under cover of the darkness his two equally gallant followers had crept underneath the vehicle, while he waited in the thicket for the right time to strike."

"I leave you to guess the rest. The three remaining soldiers taken unawares, the horses unsaddled, the diligence finally driven down the hill by our hero, while inside the coach his two followers were doing their best to assure little Madeleine and her parents that all was well. Soon they abandoned the cumbersome diligence and took to the road. That part of the story is perhaps less exciting though no less heroic. The Scarlet Pimpernel has nineteen followers; it was their task to be on the road, to aid the fugitives with disguises, to help in the great task of reaching the coast in safety."

"And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the story," his highness concluded, rising. "Let us go and drink some of my friend Blakeney's excellent punch. But after we have drunk our toast for the king, let us raise our glasses to our national hero, the Scarlet Pimpernel."

With a courtly bow and a smile he offered his arm to Marguerite Blakeney who, with a glistening tear in her beautiful eyes, gave his highness a glance of gratitude.

"Are you coming, Blakeney?" the prince said with a merry laugh. "You must drink our toast, too, remember. To the gallant Scarlet Pimpernel!"

All the ladies laughed, partly with gaiety, but also with excitement. Then with one accord they cried, "Come and drink, Sir Percy, to the gallant Scarlet Pimpernel."

"I'll come, dear ladies," Sir Percy said with a sigh, "since his highness commands, but you'll forgive me if I cannot drink to that damned, elusive shadow."

Laughing still, the ladies cried, "Fie, Sir Percy! Jealous again?"

And little Madeleine, with her great childish gaze fixed upon the handsome English gentleman, cried in her piping little voice "Fie, Sir Percy!"

[THE END.]

## How the Useful Plants Came to Mankind

By T. E. STEWARD  
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### The Watermelon

ONE becomes convinced that there is nothing new in the world when he learns that the watermelon comes from Africa and grows wild by thousands in the native home of the race which fancies it most. It is one of relatively few widely dispersed food plants that come in the first instance from the Dark Continent.

Even as recent a botanist as the great Swede, Linnaeus, believed the watermelon to have come from southern Italy, where he had seen it growing in abundance. The plant had spread during the days of ancient civilizations, and at the opening of the Christian era was grown in Egypt, Palestine, Greece, the Roman empire, and probably in India.

That its origin should have been shrouded in mystery is not strange when one remembers that Africa was little explored until the middle of the Nineteenth century. In fact Livingstone, the famous missionary, may have been the first to establish it as African. In his travels he found it growing wild in abundance and established beyond a doubt that it was indigenous to that land.

The watermelon is one of the food plants shown in drawings on ancient Egyptian monuments, proving that they were familiar with it. This makes it likely that it was known also to the ancient Israelites, who carried on commerce with Egypt and were carried into captivity in that country. Spanish and Berber names with antique characteristics go to show that it was also grown in the western end of the Mediterranean in days very long ago.

Not until the Tenth century A. D. was this melon introduced into China, where it goes under the name, "sikua," but the Sanskrit name, "chayapula" indicates its ancient cultivation in India.

Wild watermelons are frequently bitter, a character that has been bred out of the domesticated varieties. The native negroes burst the melons with a club and taste the juice, saving the sweet ones and leaving the bitter ones where they lie.

Further proof of its African origin lies in the fact that scientists have failed to find the watermelon growing wild in any other part of the world. It is a member of the citron family, scientifically known as *Citrullus vul-*