

ADVENTURES OF THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL





# The Adventures Of The Scarlet Pimpernel

**Baroness Orczy** 

This is only part of the book.

#### THE PRINCIPAL WITNESS

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THOSE who knew the widow Lesueur declared that she was quite incapable of the villainous and spiteful action which landed poor Josephine Palmier in the dock for theft. This may or may not be so. Citoyenne Lesueur had many friends, seeing that she was well-to-do

and in good odour with all the Committees and Sections that tyrannized over humble folk in a manner which recalled the very worst days of the old regime, to the distinct advantage of the latter. Moreover, Achille Lesueur was a fine man, with a distinct way with the women. He had a glossy black moustache and flashing dark

eyes, since he was a true son of the South, rather inclined to be quarrelsome; and he had very decided views on politics, had Achille. You should hear him singing the Carmagnole: "Ca ira! Ca ira!" and "Les aristos... la lanterne!" He did it so lustily, it verily sent a thrill all down your spine.

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He was for destroying everything that pertained to the old order: titles, of course, and private ownership of every sort and kind, and the lives of all those who did not agree with him. Land must belong to the nation, and all that grew on the land and was produced under the earth or brought out of the sea. Everything must belong to the people:

that was Achille's creed. Houses and fields and cattle and trees and women. Oh, above all, women! Women were the property of the nation.

That was the grand new creed, which had lately been propounded at Achille's Club--the Cordeliers. And everybody knows that what the

Cordeliers discuss to-day becomes law by decree of the National

Assembly the day after to-morrow.

pretty and had the dainty appearance which, in these grand days of perfect equality, proclaimed past sojourn in the house of a whilom aristocrat—as a menial, probably. Bah! Achille, whenever he tried to question Josephine about the past and received no satisfactory answer, would spit and leer; for he had a wholesome contempt for all aristocrats and bourgeois and capitalists, and people of all sorts who had more money than he—Achilles Lesueur, the only son of his mother—happened to have at the moment.

Did I mention the fact that the widow Lesueur was very well-to-do, that she owned an excellent little business for the sale of wines, both wholesale and retail, and that Achille's creed that everything should

belong to the people did not go to the length of allowing, say, Hector and Alcibiade, to help themselves to a stray bottle or so of the best Roussillon which happened to be standing invitingly on his mother's

counter?

Now, there were many who averred that Achille Lesueur became a devotee of that creed only after Josephine Palmier, his mother's maid-of-all-work, disdained his amorous advances. Josephine was

How he explained this seeming discrepancy in his profession of faith I do not pretend to say. Perhaps he did not consider it a discrepancy, and drew a firm line between the ownership of the people and the dishonesty of individuals. Be that as it may, Achille Lesueur had made up his mind that he was in love with Josephine Palmier and that he would honour her by asking her to become his wife.

She refused--refused categorically and firmly; gave as an excuse that

flashing eyes, the long maternal purse, and the irresistible ways? It was unthinkable! The wench was shy, ignorant, stupid, despite her airs and graces of an out-at-elbows aristocrat. Achille persevered in his suit, enlisted his mother's help, who indeed could not imagine

she could give him no love in return. No love, to him--Achille--with the

transparently thin; her lips looked pinched with cold, and her hair was lank and lustreless.

Now she still looked pale and was not over-plump; but the Citizeness Lesueur told all her neighbours that the wench had a voracious appetite, very difficult to satisfy, and that in accordance with the national decree, she was being treated as a friend of the house.

how any girl in her five senses could throw away such a splendid chance. Josephine Palmier had looked half-starved when first she applied for the situation of maid-of-all-work in the widow Lesueur's house. She had great purple rings under her eves and hands almost

never knew these days! Half-starved aristocrats were glad enough to share the bread of honest citizens in any capacity; and it was a well-known fact that the ci-devant Comtesse d'Aurillac had been cook to Citizen Louvet before she was sent as a traitor and a spy to the quillotine.

And now this wanton ingratitude! Josephine Palmier, a waif out of the gutter, refusing the hand of Achille, his mother's only son, in marriage!

Ah, ha! Was the baggage perchance an aristocrat in disquise? One

Achille was persistent, and Josephine obstinate. Citoyenne veuve Lesueur, whilst watching the growth of her son's passion, waxed exasperated.

Ш

Then the crisis came.

Achille's passion reached its climax, and the widow Lesueur's anger no longer knew bounds. The baggage must go. Had anyone ever seen such wanton wickedness? First to encourage Achille's

those abominable English spies who literally infested Paris these days, intriguing and suborning traitors and seducing the daughters of honest patriots, so as to point with hypocritical finger afterwards at the so-called immoral tendencies of this glorious revolution. Oh, no! Citoyenne Lesueur did not mince matters.

"Take your rags and chattels with you, my wench, and go!"

And Josephine, tearful, humiliated, anxious for the future of pauvre maman, who was quietly starving in a garret whilst her daughter earned a precarious livelihood for both as a household drudge, put together her few tiny possessions—mere relics of former happy times—and went out of the Citoyenne Lesueur's inhospitable doors,

attentions--oh, yes! the whilom aristo had from the first made eyes at the rich and handsome son of the house. Now, no doubt, she had some traitor waiting for her somewhere, or even perhaps one of

This had occurred in the late afternoon of the 6th Floreal, which corresponds with the 25th day of April of more ordinary calendars.

On the morning of the 7th, which was Saturday, Citoyenne Lesueur came downstairs to the shop as usual, a little after six, took down the shutters, and started to put the place tidy for the day's work; when, chancing to look on the drawer which contained the takings of the week, she saw at once that it had been tampered with, the lock forced, the woodwork scratched.

followed by the latter's curses and ieers--Achille having been got

safely out of the way for the occasion.

With hands trembling with anxiety, the worthy widow fumbled for her keys, found them, opened the drawer, and there was confronted with the full evidence of her misfortune. Two hundred francs had been abstracted from the till—oh! the citoyenne was quite positive as to that, for she had tied that money up separately with a piece of string

before, turned out of the house for immoral ways, with which Citoyenne Lesueur had only put up all this while out of pity and because the girl was so poor and so friendless. Then there was the testimony of Achille. He had returned from his Club at ten o'clock that evening. He was positive as to the time, because the clock of the Hotel de Ville was striking the hour at the very moment when he saw Josephine Palmier outside his mother's shop. She was wrapped in a dark cloak, and carried a bundle under her arm. He--Achille--could not understand what the girl might be doing there, out in the streets at that hour, for he knew nothing of the quarrel between her and his mother. He spoke to her, it seems, called her by name; but she did not respond, and hurried by in the direction of the river. Achille was very much puzzled at this incident, but the hour being so late he did not think of waking his mother and telling her of this strange rencontre, nor did he think of going into the shop to see if everything was in order. What would you? One does not always think of everything! But there the matter stood, and the money was gone, And Citovenne

and set it in a special corner of the drawer. As for the baggage--eh!

To begin with, she had been dismissed for bad conduct the evening

was not her guilt patent to everyone?

name, the worthy widow was now quite positive. That Josephine was nought but an aristo in disguise looked more and more likely every moment.

The citoyenne recalled many an incident. Name of a name, what a terrible affair! If only she had not been possessed of such a commiserating heart, she would have turned the baggage out into the

veuve Lesueur called in the Chief Commissary of the Section and gave her testimony, and attested as a patriot and a citizen against Josephine, known to her as Palmier. That this was an assumed But now, what further testimony did any Commissary want, who is set at his post by the Committee of Public Safety for the protection of the

life and property of honest citizens and for the punishment of bourgeois and aristos--traitors all--who are for ever intriguing against

street long ago.

both?

As for Achille, he attested and deposed, fumed, raged, and swore; would have struck the Citizen Commissary had he dared, when the latter cast doubt upon his-Achille's-testimony; suggested that the

Club of the Cordeliers was known for its generous libations, and that at that hour of the night any of its members might be pardoned for not recognizing even a pretty wench in the dark. And the Rue des Enfers

was always a very dark street, the Citizen Commissary concluded indulgently.

Achille was beside himself with rage. Imagine his word being doubted! What was this glorious Revolution coming to, he desired to know? In the end. he vowed that Josephine Palmier was both a thief

and an aristocrat, but that he--Achille Lesueur, the most soulful and

selfless patriot the Republic had ever known—was ready to exercise the rights conferred upon him by the recent decree of the National Convention and take the wench for his wife; whereupon she would automatically become his property, and, as the property of the aforesaid soulful and selfless patriot, be no longer amenable to the

adoresaid soulful and selfless patriot, be no longer amenable to the guillotine.

Achille had inherited that commiserating heart from his mother

Achille had inherited that commiserating heart from his mother apparently; and the Chief Commissary of the Section, himself a humane and a just man if somewhat weak greatly approved of this

humane and a just man, if somewhat weak, greatly approved of this solution to his difficulties. Between ourselves, he did not believe very firmly in Josephine's quilt, but would not have dared to dismiss her

III

All would then have been well, but that Josephine Palmier, from the

without sending her before the Tribunal lest this indulgence on his

part be construed into trafficking with aristos.

depths of the prison where she had been incarcerated for three days, absolutely refused to be a party to this accommodating arrangement. She refused to be white-washed by the amorous hands of Achille Lesueur, declared that she was innocent and the victim of an

abominable conspiracy hatched by mother and son in order to inveigle her into a hated marriage.

Thus the matter became very serious. From a mere question of theft, the charge had grown into one of false accusation, of conspiracy

against two well-known and highly respected citizens. The Citizen Chief Commissary scratched his head in uttermost perplexity. The trouble was that he did not believe that the accusation was a false

one. In his own mind, he was quite certain that the widow and her precious son had adopted this abominable means of bringing the recalcitrant girl to the arms of a hated lover.

But, name of a name! what is a Commissary to do? Being a wise man. Citizen Commissary Bourgoin referred the whole matter to a

Revolutionary Tribunal, the Tribunal Extraordinaire, where five judges and a standing jury would pronounce whether Josephine Palmier was a traitor, an aristo, as well as a thief, and one who has trafficked with English spies for the destruction of the Republic.

higher authority: in other words, he sent the prisoner to be tried by the

And here the unfortunate girl is presently arraigned, charged with a multiplicity of crimes, any one of which will inevitably lead her to the

quillotine.

Somehow, the affair has excited public interest, and Achille Lesueur and his widowed mother, being well-to-do sellers of good wine, have many friends.

Attorney-General Fouquier-Tinville has read the indictment. The accused stands in the dock facing the five judges, with a set,

determined look on her face. She wears a plain grey frock with long, narrow sleeves down to her pale, white hands, which accentuate the slimness of her appearance. The white kerchief round her shoulders and the cap which conceals her fair hair are spotlessly clean. Maman has carefully washed and ironed them herself and brought them to

Citizen Fouquier-Tinville, the Attorney-General, has the case in hand. Citizen Dumas, the Judge-President, fixes the accused with his pale, threatening eye. The narrow court is crowded to the ceiling.

Josephine in the prison, so that the child should look neat before her judges.

"Accused, what answer do you give to the indictment?" the Judge-President questions sternly.

"I am innocent," the girl replies firmly. "I was not in the Rue des Enfers at the hour when yonder false witness declares that he spoke with

me."

girl with his eyes. Every now and again he sighs, and his red, spatulated hands are clasped compulsively together. At Josephine's last words, spoken in a tone of unutterable contempt, a crimson flush spreads over his face, and his teeth—white and sharp as those of some wild, feline creature—bury themselves in his fleshy lower lip. His mother, who sits beside him, demure and consequential in sober

black with open-work mittens on her thin, wrinkled hands, gives Achille a warning look and a scarce-perceptible nudge. It were not

Achille, who sits on a bench immediately below the jury, devours the

"I am innocent!" the girl insists. "I do not know why the Citizeness Lesueur should try and fasten such an abominable crime on me."

Here the Attorney-General takes her up sharply.

"The Citizeness Lesueur cannot be accused of tr ying to make you out a thief, since her only. son is prepared to make you his wife."

"I would rather die accused of the vilest crimes known upon this earth," she retorts firmly, "than wed a miserable liar and informer!"

Achille utters a cry of rage not unlike that of a wild beast. Again his mother has to restrain him. But the public is in sympathy with him. Imagine that pitiful aristo scorning the love of so fine a patriot!

wise to betray before these judges feelings of which they might

disapprove.

The Attorney-General is waxing impatient.

"If you are innocent," he says tartly, "prove it. The Revolutionary

Committee of your Section has declared you to be a Suspect, and ordered your arrest as such. The onus to prove your innocence now

rests with you."

"At ten o'clock on the night of the 6th Floreal, I was with my mother," the girl insists calmly, "in the Rue Christine—at the opposite end of the city to where the Rue des Enfers is situated."

"Prove it," reiterates the Attorney-General imperturbably.

"My mother can testify—" the girl retorts.

But Citizen Fouquier-Tinville shrugs his shoulders.

known to condone their children's crimes. The law does not admit the testimony of a mother, a father, a husband, or a wife. Was anyone else at the Rue Christine that night--one who saw you, and can swear that you could not possibly have been at the Rue des Enfers at the hour to which the principal witness hath attested?" But this time the girl is dumb. Her sensitive lips are drawn closely together, as if they would guard a secret which must remain inviolate. "Well?" the Attorney-General goes on with a sneer. "You do not reply. Where is the witness who can testify that you were in the Rue Christine, at the other end of Paris, at the hour when the principal witness swears that he saw you in the Rue des Enfers?" Again the accused gives no reply. And now it is the turn of the five judges to become insistent first, then impatient, and finally very anary. Every one of them has, in turn, put the same proposition to the accused: "You say that the principal witness could not have seen you in the Rue des Enfers at ten o'clock of the 6th Floreal, because at that hour you were in the Rue Christine. Well, prove it!" And every one of them has received the same mute answer: an obstinate silence, the sight oo a face pale and drawn, and a glance from large, purple-rimmed eyes that have a haunting, terrified look in them now. In the end, the Judge-President sums up the case and orders the jury to "get themselves convinced". And this they must do by deliberating and voting audibly in full hearing of the public; for such is the law today.

"A mother is not a witness," he says curtly. "Mothers have been

convinced". The murmur itself is confused: only from time to time a word, a broken phrase, penetrates to the ear of the public or to that of the unfortunate girl who is awaiting her doom. Such words as "obvious guilt", or "no doubt a traitor", "nought but an aristo", "the quillotine", occur most frequently; especially "the quillotine". It is such a simple solver of problems, such an easy way to set all doubts at The accused stands in the dock facing the judges. She does not glance in the direction of the jury. She seems like a statue fashioned of alabaster, a ghost-like harmony in grey and white, her kerchief scarce whiter than her cheeks. Then suddenly there is a sensation. Through the hum of the jury "debating audibly", a raucous voice is raised from out the body of the public, immediately behind the dock. "Name of a dog! Why, Cyrano lodges at No. 12, Rue Christine. He was there on the evening of the 6th. Eh, Cyrano? En avant, my

rest!

For awhile thereupon, nothing is heard in the court save that audible murmur from the stand where the jury are "getting themselves

ancient!" "Cyrano, en avant!" The chorus is taken up by several men in ragged shirts and blouses, to the accompaniment of ribald laughter and one or two coarse jokes.

The jury cease their "audible deliberation". Remember that this Tribunal Extraordinaire is subject to no law forms. Judges and jury are here to administer justice as they understand it, not as tradition-the hated traditions of the old regime--had it in the past. They are

here principally in order to see that the Republic suffers no detriment through the actions of her citizens; and there is no one to interfere with them as to how they accomplish this laudable end.

the crowd, pushed forward into the witness-box, hustled and bundled like a bale of goods: a great, hulking fellow with muscular arms and lank, fair hair covered with grime. He is a cobbler by trade, apparently, for he wears a leather apron and generally exhales an odour of tanned leather. He has a huge nose, tip-tilted and of a rosy-purple hue; a perpetual tiny drop of moisture hangs on his left nostril, whilst another glistens unceasingly in his right eye. His appearance in the witness-box is greeted by a round of applause from his friends.

"Cyrano!" they shout gaily, and clap their hands. "Vivat, Cyrano!"

He draws his hand slowly across his nose and smiles, a shy, self-

This time, all of them being puzzled by the strangeness of the affairthe singular dearth of witnesses in such a complicated case—they listen to the voice of the public: vox populi suits their purpose for the

So, at an order from the Judge-President, someone is hauled out of

nonce.

voice, addressing the Judge-President, "because of my nose. It seems there was once a great citizen of France called Cyrano, who had a very large nose, and--"

"Never mind about that," the Judge-President breaks in impatiently.
"Tell us what you know."

"They call me Cyrano, the comrades," he says in a gentle, indulgent

deprecating smile which sits quaintly on one so powerfully built.

"Tell us what you know."
"I don't know much, Citizen," the man replies with a doleful sigh. "The comrades, they will have their little game."

"What is your name, and where do you lodge?"

He fumbles with one hand inside his shirt, for he wears no coat, and out of that mysterious receptacle he presently produces his certificatory Carte de Civisme--his identity card, what?--which the sergeant of the Revolutionary guard, who stands beside the witnessbox, snatches away from him and hands up to the Judge-President. Apparently the document is all in order, for the Judge returns it to the witness: then demands curtly: "You know the widow Palmier?" "Yes, Citizen Judge," replies the witness. "She lives on the top floor and my shop is down below. On the night of the 5th, I was in the lodge of the Citizen Concierge at ten o'clock when someone rang the frontdoor bell. The concierge pulled the communicating-cord and a man came in and walked very quickly past the lodge on his way to the back staircase; but not before I had seen his face and recognized him as one who has frequently visited the widow Palmier." "Who was it?" queries the Judge-President. "I don't know his name, Citizen Judge," Gradin replies slowly, "but I know him for a cursed aristocrat, one who, if I and the comrades had our way, would have been shorter by a head long ago." He still speaks in that same shy, self-deprecating way, and there is no responsive glitter in his blue eyes as he voices this cold-blooded, ferocious sentiment. The judges suddenly sit up straight in their

chairs, as if moved by a common spring. They had not expected these ultra-revolutionary terrorist opinions from the meek-looking cobbler with the watery eyes and the huge, damp nose. But the Judge-President figuratively smacks his lips, as does also Attorney-

"My name is Georges Gradin, and Hodge at No. 12, Rue Christine."

felines, gentle in speech, timid in manner and self-deprecating; but one who has sucked in bloodthirsty Marat's theories of vengeance and of murder, by every pore of his grimy skin, and hath remained more vengeful far than Danton, more relentless than Robespierre.

"So the principal witness in this mysterious case is an aristo?" the Judge-President puts in thoughtfully. "Where does he live?"

"That I do not know, Citizen Judge," Gradin replies in his meek, simple way. "But I can find him," he adds, and solemnly wipes his nose on his shirt-sleeve.

"How?" queries the Judge.

General Fouquier-Tinville. They have both already recognized the type of man with whom they have to deal: one of your ferocious

"That is my affair, Citizen," says Gradin imperturbably. "Mine, and the comrades!" Then he turns to the body of the court, there where in a compact mass of humanity a number of grimy faces are seen, craned upwards in order to catch full sight of the man in the witness-box. "Eh, comrades?" he says to them. "We can find the aristo, what?"

There is a murmur of assent, and a reiteration of the ribald joke of awhile ago. The Judge-President raps upon his desk with the palm of his hand, demands silence peremptorily. When order is restored, he

turns once more to the witness.

"Your affair!" he says curtly. "Your affair! That is not enough. The law cannot accept the word of all and sundry who may wish to help in its administration, however well-intentioned they may be; and it is the work of the Committee of Public Safety to find such traitors and aristos as are a danger to the State. You and your comrades are not competent to deal with so serious a matter."

"Then I pray you look at the accused and see if we are not competent to find the aristo whom she is trying to shield." He gave a short, dry laugh, and pointed a long, stained finger at the unfortunate girl in the dock. All eyes were immediately turned to her. Indeed, it required no deep knowledge of psychology to interpret accurately the look of horror and of genuine fear which literally distorted Josephine Palmier's pale, emaciated face, And now, when she saw the eyes of the five judges fixed sternly upon her, a hoarse cry escaped her trembling lips. "It is false!" she cried, and clung to the bar of the dock with both hands as if she were about to fall. "The man is lying! No one came that evening to maman's lodgings. There was no one there but maman and I." "Give me and the comrades till to-morrow, Citizen Judge," Gradin interposed meekly; "and we'll have the aristo here, to prove who it is that is lying now." The Moniteur, of the 10th Floreal, year 1, which gives a detailed account of that memorable sitting of the Tribunal Extraordinaire, tells us that after this episode there was a good deal of confusion in the court. The jury, once more ordered by the judges to deliberate and to vote audibly, decided that the principal witness on behalf of the accused must appear before the court on the morrow at three o'clock of the afternoon; failing which, Josephine Palmier would be convicted of periury and conspiracy directed against the persons of Citizeness veuve Lesueur and her son Achille, a crime which entailed the death sentence. Gradin stepped down from the witness-box, a hero before the public.

He was soon surrounded by his friends and led away in triumph.

"Not competent, Citizen Judge?" Georges Gradin gueries meekly.

whichever way the affair turned new they would have ample revenge for all the disdain they had suffered at the hands of the unfortunate Josephine.

As for Achille and his mother, they had listened to Georges Gradin's evidence with derision rather than with wrath. No doubt they felt that

The Moniteur concludes its account of the episode by the bald statement that the accused was taken back to the cells in a state of unconsciousness.

### IV

The public was on tenterhooks about the whole affair. The latter had the inestimable charm which pertains to the unusual. Here was something new--something different to the usual tableau of the

bourgeois or the aristocrat arraigned for spying or malpractices against the safety of the Republic; to the usual proud speech from the accused, defying the judges who condemned; to the usual brief indictment and swift sentence, followed by the daily spectacle of the

tumbril dragging a few more victims to the guillotine. Here, there was mystery; a secret jealously guarded by the accused,

who apparently preferred to risk her neck rather than drag some unknown individual--an aristo evidently, and her lover--before the tribunal, even in the mere capacity of witness.

And so the court is crowded on this second day of Josephine's trial.

with working-men and shopmen, with women and some children. A sight, what? This girl, half-aristocrat, half-maid-of-all-work! And the handsome Achille--how will he take the whole affair? He has been

madly in love with the accused, so they say,

composed than yesterday, stands in the dock, grasping the rail with her thin, white hands, her whole slender body slightly bent forward, as if in an attitude of tense expectancy.

Anon, Georges Gradin appears upon the scene, is greeted with loud guffaws and calls of "Vivat, Cyrano!" He is pushed along, jostled, bundled forward, till he finds himself once more in the witness-box, confronting the Judge-President, who demands sternly:

"The witness you promised to find—the aristocrat—where is he?"

"Gone, Citizen Judge!" Gradin exclaims, and throws up his arms with
a gesture of desperation. "Gone; the canaillee scoundre!! The

"Gone? Name of a dog, what do you mean?"

And will Cyrano produce the principal witness as he promised that he would do? A fine fellow, that Cyrano, and hater of aristos! Name of a

The court is crowded: the judges waiting. The accused, more

name, how he hated them!

traitor!"

President has echoed it by bringing his heavy fist down with a crash upon his desk. The other judges, too, have asked the question by gesture, exclamation, every token of wrath. And the same query has been re-echoed by a hundred throats, rendered dry and raucous with excitement.

"Gone? Where? How? What do you mean?"

It is Fouguier-Tinville who actually voices the guestion. But the Judge-

"Gone? Where? How? What do you mean?"

And Gradin, meek, ferocious, with great hairy hands clawing the rail of the witness-box, explains.

Bibliotheque de la Nation. That is how we meant to find him. We went in bands, two and three of us at a time. We did not know where he lodged; but we knew we should find him at one of those places—then we would tell him that his sweetheart was in peril—we knew we could get him here— But he has gone—gone; the scoundrel, the canaille! They told us at the Club Republicain he had been gone five days... got a forged passport through the agency of those abominable English spies—the Scarlet Pimpernel, what? It was all arranged the night of the 6th, when he went to the Rue Christine, and the accused and her mother were to have joined him the next day. But the accusation was launched by that time and the Palmiers, mother and daughter, were detained in the city. But he has gone! The thief! The coward!"

"We scoured Paris all last night, the comrades and I," he begins, in short, halting sentences. "We knew one or two places the aristo was wont to haunt-the Cafe de la Montagne, the Club Republicain, the

"But me and the comrades will be even with him yet! Aye, even!" he reiterated, with that sleek and ferocious accent which had gained him the confidence of the judges. "And in a manner that will punish him worse than even the guillotine could have done. Eh, comrades?"

He turned to the crowd, amongst whom his friends were still conspicuous, stretched out his long, hairy arm, and shook his fist at

an imaginary foe.

a failure. The accused might just as well have been condemned the day before and much trouble would have been saved.

Attorney-General Fouquier-Tinville alone rejoices. His indictment of

The Judge-President shrugs his shoulders. The whole thing has been

the accused would now stand in its pristine simplicity: "Josephine Palmier, accused of conspiring against the property and good name of Citizeness Lesueur and her son." A crime against the safety of the He is not sure that he ever believed in the latter's existence, and hardly listens to Georges Gradin, still muttering with sleek ferocity: "I'll be even with the aristo!"

The Judge-President, weary, impatient, murmurs mechanically: "How?"

Georges Gradin thoughtfully wipes his nose, looks across at the accused with a leer on his face, and a sickly smile upon his lips.

"I'll marry the accused myself," he says, with a shy, self-deprecating shrug of his broad shoulders. "I must be even with the aristo."

Republic. The death sentence to follow as a natural sequence. Fouquier-Tinville cares nothing about a witness who cannot be found.

Lesueur has pushed his way forward from out the crowd at the back.

"You fool!" he shouts, in a voice half-strangled with rage. "She has refused to marry me!"

"The law takes no count of a woman's whim," Gradin rejoins simply.

Everyone looks at the accused. She appears ready to swoon. Achille

"She is the property of the State. Is that not so, comrades?"

He is fond of appealing to his friends: does so at every turn of events; and they stand by him with moral support, which consists in making a great deal of noise and in shouting ""Vivat, Cyrano!" at every opportunity. They are a rough-looking crowd, these comrades of Gradin: mechanics, artisans, citizens with or without employment, of the kind that are not safely tampered with these days. They are the rulers of France.

the kind that are not safely tampered with these days. They are the rulers of France.

Now they have ranged themselves against Achille Lesueur: call him "bourgeois" to his face, and quoticapitalist".

"Yes!" asserts Gradin. "Her name is de Lamoignan. Her father was a ci-devant--an aristo--of the worst type."

"If she marries anyone, she marries me!" asserts Achille.

"We'll see about that!" comes in quick response from Gradin. "A moi, comrades!"

"The aristo shall wed Gradin, not Achille! Vivat, Cyrano!" they shout.

Georges Gradin is within his rights. By decree of the Convention, a female aristocrat becomes the property of the State. Is Josephine

Palmier an aristocrat?

And before the judge or jury, or anyone there for that matter, can recover from the sudden shock of surprise, Gradin, with three strides of his long legs, is over the bar of the dock, in the dock itself the next moment, and has seized Josephine Palmier and thrown her across his broad shoulders as if she were a bale of goods. To clinch the

bargain, he imprints a smacking kiss upon her cheek. Josephine Palmier's head rolls almost inert upon her shoulders, white and death-like save for the crimson glow on one side of her face, there where her conquering captor has set his seal of possession. Gradin gives a long, coarse laugh.

"She does not care for me, it seems," he says, in his usual self-

The comrades laugh. "Vivat, Cyrano!" And they close in around their

deprecating way. "But it will come."

friend, who once more, with one stride of his long limbs, is over the bar of the dock, at the back of it this time, and is at once surrounded by a yelling, gesticulating crowd.

There is indescribable confusion. Vainly does the Attorney-General

wooden mallet against his desk. Everyone shouts, everyone gesticulates; most people laugh. Such a droll fellow, that Cyrano, with his big nose! There he is, just by the doorway now, still surrounded by "the comrades". But his huge frame towers above the crowd, and across his broad shoulder, still slung like a bale of goods, lies the unconscious body of Josephine Palmier. In the doorway he turns. His glance sweeps over the court, above the massed heads of the throng; and suddenly he flings something white and weighty across the court. It lands on the desk of the Judge-President. Then, using the inert body of the girl as a battering-ram wherewith to forge himself a way through the fringe of the crowd, he begins to move. His strength, his swiftness, above all his authority, carry him through. In less than ten seconds he has scattered the crowd and has gained ten paces on the foremost amongst them. The five judges and the jury are left gasping; and the Judge-President's trembling hands mechanically finger the missile, whilst with every second the pseudo-Gradin has forged ahead, striding with long limbs that know neither hesitation nor slackness. He knows his way about

shout himself hoarse, vainly does the Judge-President rap with a

this Palace of Justice as no one else does probably in the whole of Paris. In and out of corridors, through guarded doors and down winding stairs, he goes with an easy, swinging stride, never breaking into a run. To those who stare at him with astonishment or who try to stop him, he merely shouts over his shoulder: "A female aristocrat! The spoils of the nation! The Judge-President has just given her to me. A fine wife, what?"

Some of them know Gradin the cobbler by sight. A ferocious fellow with whom it is not safe to interfere; and name of a name, what a patriot! As for "the comrades", they have been merged with the crowd, Less than five minutes later, there is a coming and a going, and a rushing; orders given; shouts and curses flying from end to end, from court to corridor. The whole machinery of the executive of the Committee of Public Safety is set in motion to find traces of a giant

The Judge-President has at last mastered the contents of that missile flung at him by the cobbler across the court. It consists of a scrap of paper, scrawled over with a doggerel rhyme and a signature drawn in red, representing a small, five-petalled flower in shape like a Scarlet

cobbler, carrying a fainting aristocrat upon his shoulders.

swallowed up, disappeared. Who shall recognize them amongst so

But of "Cyrano" there is not a trace, nor yet of half a dozen of his "comrades" who had been so conspicuous in the court when first he had snatched the aristocrat Josephine Palmier from the dock.

٧

Pimpernel.

manv?

in the year 1793, has left some interesting memoirs, wherein he gives an account of the last days which he spent in Paris, when his fiancee, Mademoiselle Josephine de Lamoignan, driven by extreme poverty to do the roughest kitchen work for a spiteful employer, was accused by the latter of petty theft, and stood in the dock under the charge. He knew nothing of her plight, for she had never told him that

Matre Rochet, the distinguished advocate who emigrated to England

she had been driven to work under an assumed name; until one evening he received the visit of a magnificent English milord, whom he subsequently knew in England as Sir Percy Blakeney.

In a few very brief words, Sir Percy told him the history of the past two

two ladies were now quite safe under the protection of a band of English gentlemen, who would see them safely across France and thence to England.

Sir Percy had come to propose that Matre Rochet should accompany them.

It was not until the distinguished advocate met his fiancee again that he heard the full and detailed account of her sufferings and of the heroism and audacity of the English adventurer who had brought her and her mother safely through perils innumerable to the happy haven

of a home in England.

days and of the iniquitous accusation and trial which had ended so fortunately for Mademoiselle de Lamoignan, and for her mother. The

## THE LURE OF THE CHATEAU

"YOU can't touch Malzieu! Whatever you do, you dare not touch him!"

And the speaker, a stout florid man with thick features and flaccid hanging mouth, brought his clenched fist down with a crash upon the table.

"And why not, if you please, Citizen Desor?" the other man retorted sharply. "Why should any traitor be inviolate, however popular he may be?"

This second speaker was a small spare man, with white, almost cadaverous face and pale, deep-set eves that darted from time to

time piercing, steel-like glances at his interlocutor. But Desor only

shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Because," he said, and made a wide sweeping gesture with his thick grimy hand, "because of the whole neighbourhood, Citizen Chauvelin, St. Brieuc is not Paris you must remember: no man with a

touch of genius gets lost in this town as he would in your big city. And you must admit that Malzieu is a genius. Did you ever see him in

Moliere? No? Or as Figaro? Name of a dog, he makes you die of laughter, And handsome, I tell you! The women just adore him, and all

St. Brieuc is justly proud of him, for this is his birthplace. The Chateau de Maljovins close by here belonged to his grandfather and is now in the possession of his cousin Desire. You can't touch him, I say, for if

you do there will be riots in St. Brieuc, and not a single servant of the Republic, civil or military, would be left alive to take the tale as far as Paris."

other's prying. Then presently he said with quiet emphasis:

"We can't allow a man to remain in such a position. Any man who is
the idol of a rabble is a danger to the State."

"He will be a danger," Desor retorted, "if you arrest him."

"That would surely depend on the grounds for the arrest." Chauvelin

Chauvelin remained silent after that with eyes closed and lips tightly as if he were striving to shut every ingress to his mind against the

"I don't understand you," Desor muttered. "Malzieu has done nothing. He is a good patriot, he--"

"If Malzieu, for instance, were to commit a crime--"

rejoined blandly.

Desor laughed. "Malzieu?" he exclaimed. "A crime? He wouldn't harm a cat."

Chauvelin uttered an ejaculation of impatience.

"You are obtuse, my friend," he said. "If Malzieu were to commit a crime—a brutal, cowardly crime—I imagine that the rabble who adore him now, discovering that their idol had feet of clay, would quickly

him now, discovering that their idol had feet of clay, would quickly enough hurl him down from his pedestal."

"Yes!" Desor admitted. "If!"

"Well, then!" Chauvelin rejoined significantly, and fixed those pale, scrutinizing eyes of his on his companion. Desor met those eyes,

scrutinizing eyes of his on his companion. Desor met those eyes, interrogated them for a second or two, until something in their cold, steely gaze mirrored the dark thoughts within.

"You mean --?" he murmured. Chauvelin merely shrugged and retorted: "Why not?" "A difficult problem, Citizen Chauvelin!" was Desor's dry remark. "But not one above your powers, Citizen," Chauvelin concluded

blandly.

II It was on a cold, gusty day in late September that Citizen Fernand

Malzieu received the visit of one Desor, a lawyer of somewhat shady

antecedents, settled in St. Brieuc since poor Pegou, the oldestablished notary, had paid on the quillotine the price of his own lovalty to former clients. Desor brought some interesting news, none the less welcome because it came through such an unpleasant

channel. Malzieu's cousin, Desire, who owned the old chateau of

Maljovins, had died, leaving the property to his next of kin, Fernand, the last of his name. Desire Malzieu had all his life been an eccentric, not to say a maniac. For years he had lived in the old chateau, all alone, seeing no one, waited on by one old woman who ministered to all his wants. Nothing was known about his life, save that periodically he would go to Paris, taking his old servant Julie with him. Desire

kept an old horse and chaise: he would harness the one to the other and off he and old Julie would go: they would remain absent sometimes two months, sometimes as much as six; but no one knew when they went or when they came back. The old chateau appeared equally lonely, equally desolate whether the master was in residence or no; of late he had been absent for the best part of a year, and the

news of his death had, it seems, come from Paris. For nearly a year the old chateau had been deserted: it stood perched high up on the cliffs, above the turbulent ocean, and the booming of the waves mother were still alive, he had been a constant visitor at the chateau, but of late he and his cousin had drifted apart. Desire's eccentricities, his maniacal love of solitude, had kept Fernand's attempts at friendship at bay. And now he was dead and Fernand the rover, the mountebank, found himself in possession of what he had coveted more than anything else in the world: the old family chateau. It was

dull and grey and lonely, but it was Maljovins. Fernand laughed when Desor reminded him of a somewhat curious condition attached to the

against the granite rocks had been the only sound that broke the

But Fernand, with the mercurial, artistic temperament of his class. had always loved Maliovins. As a boy, when Desire's father and

make it your habitual dwelling-place. If you are ever absent from it more than three months in any one year, the estate and the chateau become the property of Julie Navet, the faithful servant of your late cousin, Desire."

"I have no greater wish. Citizen Notary." Fernand retorted. "than to

"The place is only yours. Citizen." the notary said. "as long as you

"And you are not afraid?" "Afraid of what?" "Oh, I don't know," the notary said, and he gave a shudder, as if a

wave of cold had passed down his spine. "They say the place is

haunted."

live at Maliovins for the rest of my days."

silence of the grim solitude.

legacy.

"I would love to see a ghost."

before now, made it a place of refuge."

"They'll be welcome to anything I take there with me."

"You are determined, then, Citizen?"

"It has been deserted for so long, they say, that malefactors have,

"Certainly I am. Would you have me refuse so brilliant a legacy? I am a poor man, Citizen Notary," Malzieu continued with simple dignity, "and my marriage to the Citizeness Celeste Gambier is delayed through my lack of means."

you luck, Citizen! When do you go to Maljovins?"
"To-morrow."

Already the lawyer had collected his papers and stuffed them into a

"Ah!" concluded the notary, "that accounts for everything. Well, I wish

hat and took his leave.

"Good luck, Citizen," he said once more as Malzieu escorted him through the ante-room and there bade him good-bye.

leather wallet which he carried under his arm. He now reached for his

#### Ш

A quarter of an hour later Fernand Malzieu was speeding through the streets of St. Brieuc. Daylight was quickly fading into dusk. The streets were ill-lighted, and in the shelter of doorways and obscure

passages furtive figures crouched under cover of the darkness. But Malzieu paid no heed to these. He feared no one in this town, for he was conscious of his own.popularity and of the love which his fellow-

was conscious of his own.popularity and of the love which his fellowtownsmen-even those of the underworld-had for him. For the past ten vears Malzieu had made France laugh. and France had very settle down permanently in Paris as a member of the Comedie francaise, he had continued to make St. Brieuc his headquarters and went on living there, in his native town, simply, unostentatiously, waiting for better times so that he might marry pretty Celeste, the daughter of Citizen Gambier, the municipal doctor.

Malzieu had come to a halt outside a low, narrow house in the Rue des Remparts. It was the house inhabited by the Citizen Gambier and his daughter Celeste. Fernand had just plied the knocker with his accustomed impatience when a tall man wearing a huge caped coat and chapeau-bras, which further enhanced his stature, accosted him by slapping him lustily on the back.

great need of laughter these days; and he was handsome withal, and genial, spent as freely as he got, and, despite tempting offers to

Are you not rehearsing a new role? I must see you in that."

"Ye gods! Do you know Citizen Chauvelin is in St. Brieuc? He is here on some mission of mischief, you may be sure."

"Well, luckiest of mortals!" the new-comer said gaily, "how goes the

"Milor!" Malzieu exclaimed with a thought of consternation in his

"Passing through St. Brieuc," the other replied, "on my way to Paris.

world with you?"

voice. "what are you doing in this town?"

proprietor of my ancestral chateau."

"To keep an eye on you probably, my friend," the stranger retorted dryly. "But you have never answered my first question yet."

Iryly. "But you have never answered my first question yet."

How the world goes with me?" Malzieu rejoined lightly "Well We

"How the world goes with me?" Malzieu rejoined lightly. "Well! We produce the new play on Thursday, and I have just become the

"To-morrow, if all's well, It is only mine. I must tell you on condition that I am never absent from it longer than three months at a time." "Ah! An eccentric will, then? Whose was it?" "My cousin, Desire de Malzieu, left me the property." The Englishman frowned. "Ah!" he said, "I did not know he was dead." "You knew him?" "I had heard of him--in Paris." The two men were about to part, and Malzieu was already grasping his friend's hand, bidding him good night, when the Englishman suddenly said with grave earnestness:

"Two excellent bits of news," the Englishman said. "I shall hope to applaud you on Thursday. When do you take possession of your

chateau?"

this will--"

"Don't go to Maljovins to-morrow, Fernand. Wait a week or two. You lose nothing by waiting and the whole affair sounds to me like a trap."

"A trap, milor?" Fernand retorted, with a merry laugh, "who should want to entrap me? I am not worth killing. I only possess a thousand lives in all the world, and labout how them in the process of the party house them.

livres in all the world, and I shan't have them in my pocket when I go to Maljovins."

"I know, I know," the Englishman rejoined with an impatient sigh. "But you'll admit that I have had some experience of these revolutionary devils over here, and of their methods, and there's something about

danger, it is not to-morrow that I shall go to Maljovins, but to-night." Whereupon the Englishman said no more, but went his way, whilst Fernand ran up the stone stairs of the house in the Rue des Remparts two at a time, for he was in a mighty hurry to tell his beloved Celeste of the good fortune that had just fallen to his lot. That same evening, half an hour after Fernand had taken leave of Dr. Gambier and Celeste, and whilst the girl was tidving up the little apartment preparatory to going to bed, she saw that a slip of paper had been mysteriously inserted underneath the front door. Not being of a nervy disposition, she picked up the note and unfolded it. In it was written: If you ever need a friend, ask advice from the public letter-writer at the angle of Passage Fontaine. Celeste had been gravely puzzled when she read the note: but she had also been amused. Was it likely that she would be in need of a friend, when she had her father and Fernand in whom she could always confide? But two days had gone by since then, and now she was indeed badly in need of a friend. She did not want to worry her father, who had plenty of troubles and cares of his own; as for Fernand--well! The trouble was about Fernand. It took Celeste some little time to make up her mind: these were times when it was not prudent to trust anyone or anything. That note may have been a trap: and yet--A few moments later Celeste was speeding along the Rue des Remparts. She noticed that at the angle of the Passage Fontaine a public letter-writer had of late set up his wares. It was five o'clock of the afternoon: a thin drizzle was falling: Celeste wrapped her shawl close round her head and shoulders and looked cautiously about her.

"Now, milor," Malzieu broke in lightly, "if you are going to warn me of

writer's table flapped dismally in the wind. The man himself appeared to be dozing under the awning: Celeste hesitated a second or two longer, then she went boldly up to the table. "I am Celeste Gambier," she said softly, "and have need of a friend. The letter-writer did not appear to move, but from somewhere out of the semi-darkness, a kindly voice murmured: "What is it?" "Fernand Malzieu has not been at his lodgings for four days," she said in a hurried whisper. "Last Friday evening, he said good night to me, telling me that he was going to Maljovins the next day to explore the old chateau. No one has seen or heard anything of him since. This is Tuesday. There was a dress-rehearsal at the theatre this morning. He did not put in an appearance. People make light of this. They say Fernand is engrossed with his good fortune, and has forgotten his duties. They say he will not fail to put in an appearance on Thursday for the production of the play, but I know Fernand better than they do: I know that nothing would make him forget his duties.

The evening was drawing in, and there were few passers-by: some fifty metres on ahead the rickety awning that sheltered the letter-

Something has happened to Fernand, and I am scared to death." As soon as she had begun her tale, the public letter-writer had roused himself from slumber, and while she spoke he made as if he were writing from her dictation. He was a funny old fellow, with

spectacles on his nose, and a shaggy mop of white hair above his high, wrinkled forehead. It was fortunate that the shades of evening were drawing in so quickly in this corner of the narrow street, and that the weather was too bad for clients of the letter-writer to be demanding his services. When Celeste had done speaking, the old

man continued for awhile to scribble aimlessly upon the sheet of paper before him, then, when there was not a single passer-by in sight, he said:

Fernand to-morrow."

Celeste wanted to ask him a question or two, but, very abruptly, the old man rose, and without paying any further heed to her, he began collecting his traps together and folding up his awning.

"It is getting dark, Citizeness," he said in a loud, gruff voice. "I am

going home now and to bed. I advise you to do the same."

"Go home now! Try not to appear anxious. I will bring you news of

And Celeste perforce had to follow this advice.

IV

which leads to the seashore. When they had reached the edge of the cliffs they turned sharply to the left toward the village of Maljovins.

"It is infernally dark," one of the men said impatiently. "Are you sure of the way?"

An hour later two men were speeding down the Chemin de la Dique

"Quite sure, Citizen," the other replied; "that sombre mass of building over there is the chateau."

"And you have provided for everything?"

"For everything, Citizen, and I know that you will be satisfied. Our men succeeded in capturing Fernand Malzieu in the courtyard of the

chateau when he arrived there on Saturday: he has been under lock and key in one of the tower rooms ever since. His cousin Desire returned from Paris this morning. My man is already there, ready to act if he has not done so already, and the old woman, Julie Navet, has agreed to my terms for giving the evidence which I require. In

witnesses to the crime. Directly afterwards, we will publish the will of Desire Malzieu, which I have prepared and which I have already shown to Fernand. This will provide us with the motive for the murder and will render the assassin doubly odious to his former worshippers. Not." Desor concluded, with absolute complacence, "we have left nothing to chance, and the Committee of Public Safety will, I hope, give me due recognition for my work."

To this broad hint Chauvelin gave no direct reply, and after a moment's silence he asked abruptly:

less than an hour we can have Fernand Malzieu under arrest for the peculiarly brutal murder of his aged cousin, and there will be two eye-

for a few francs. I have him in the hollow of my hand, as I hold proofs of certain forgeries and trafficking with our enemies which would

"You are sure of your man, I imagine?"

send him to the guillotine to-morrow. He knows that, and knows, too, that if he ever played me false or betrayed us in any way, I would use those proofs without hesitation. He has a kind of rough intelligence, too, and will act his part rightly, you may be sure."

"Julie Navet? Oh, with her, greed is master of all her actions. The way I have worded the will of Desire Malzieu she becomes sole

"I could not have found a better," Desor replied. "Orgelet is a man who ought to have been guillotined ages ago, he has half a dozen crimes on his conscience and to-day would murder his own mother

"And the woman--what is her name?"

beneficiary under it, if Fernand does not comply with the conditions. And he cannot do that if we send him to the guillotine for murder."

"The signature to the will? Is that in order?"

that in order:

"Quite in order, Citizen: and there are the signatures of the two witnesses. Indeed, indeed," the notary concluded emphatically, "you need have no fear on that score either. It is not the first time." he went on cynically, "that I have had to concoct a document of that sort, and I am not likely to bungle this one." "No," was Chauvelin's equally cynical retort, "for it would not be to your interest, Citizen, to make an enemy of me. As for your reward," he added more lightly. "you need have no fear. It will be adequate: I promise vou." After which there was silence for a while between these two partners in the infamous plot. They walked on rapidly, bending their heads to the wind: soon an irregular mass of masonry, partially hidden by clumps of trees, loomed out of the fast-gathering darkness. It was the chateau of Maliovins. The two men, silently and cautiously, began by making a tour of inspection of the entire building. The main body of the house consisted of two stories only, but in the centre of the facade an extra story had been added; it only consisted of one room, with a window and a balcony. The front of the house was approached by a paved courtyard, and it was ornamented by a colonnaded porch which gave support to another and larger balcony; under this porch was the main entrance into the chateau. To right and left the house was flanked by square, projecting towers, each of which had doors giving direct access into them from the courtvard. As the chateau was built on the side of the cliff, the upper story was on the level at the back: a broken-down veranda, covered with overgrown wild vine, gave access through glazed doors into this side of the house. Here, too, and to the left of the veranda there was an additional tower, taller than the others and octagonal in shape; this tower also had, a door which gave direct access into it. From this multiplicity of doors it was easy to infer that the rooms on the ground floor of the towers had no direct communication with other parts of the house, and that there pulled well over the eyes, they moved about the darkness noiselessly, like ghosts. They had just reached the veranda and were cautiously peering about them, when a slight sound coming from the darkest angle caused Desor suddenly to dart forward with an angry oath: the next moment there was the sound of a sharp struggle, a smothered curse, a choking murmur, and the notary dragged a man out from under the veranda into the open.

"What is the meaning of this?" Chauvelin queried in a whisper.

"Name of a dog," came in a hoarse reply from the victim of Desor's sudden onslaught, "if that is the way you treat a patriot--"

was possibly only one staircase in the centre of the chateau.

The two men had completed the tour of the building: with their linen carefully concealed by the dark lapels of their coats, and their hats

"It was a mistake, Citizen," Desor whispered apologetically. "I thought--"
"You have lost your nerve, Citizen Desor," Orgelet riposted, with a sneer. "Seeing ghosts, what? Well, am I to finish this business, or am I not?"

"Who else?" the other retorted. "A fine fright you gave me, I can tell you. And why do you interfere with my business. I'd like to know."

"Citizen Orgelet --! " murmured the notary.

"I thought to find it all done—" grunted Desor.

"I had no opportunity," was Orgelet's gruff rejoinder, "the aristo arrived late in the afternoon. He bolted and barred all the doors and

windows himself. It took me some time to get one undone."

house but the old woman, and she won't interfere with you."

But apparently Orgelet was inclined to be truculent. "If you can find someone else to do the work for you," he began; but Chauvelin once again broke in impatiently:

"Stop this wrangling!" he commanded; "and you, Citizen Orgelet, get to business: we've wasted too much time already."

Orgelet shook himself like a big, shaggy dog: then, with hands in pocket, he shuffled back up the shallow steps of the veranda, Chauvelin and Desor following closely behind him.

"Why all this to-do?" Desor retorted roughly, "there is no one in the

"I have got these shutters undone," Orgelet whispered, and softly disengaged first the outside latch of one of the shutters, and then the bolt of the glazed doors. A moment later he had stepped cautiously into the house, whilst Desor and Chauvelin remained outsidewatching. It was pitch dark. For a moment or two everything was as silent, as motionless as a grave—then from out of the darkness a soft

watching. It was prich dark. For a moment of two everything was as silent, as motionless as a grave—then from out of the darkness a soft shuffling sound made itself heard, the sound of stealthy footsteps creeping down some unseen stairs, and anon a voice came whispering through the gloom:

"Hist, is that you: Citizen Orgelet?"

"Hist, is that you; Citizen Orgelet?"

At your service, Citizeness," Orgelet replied.

The footsteps came nearer and suddenly a shaft of light pierced the

darkness, and lit up the grotesque figure of an old woman, scantily dressed in a petticoat and shawl. Orgelet had opened the shutter of a small, dark lantern which he carried in his belt: the old woman only

just succeeded in smothering the scream which had risen to her throat.

"How you frightened me, Citizen!" she murmured hoarsely. "Too late now to think of fright," Orgelet retorted. "Is everything ready?" "Yes!" the woman replied, "he has gone to bed, and there's no one in the house but me." "Which is the bedroom?" "Just up those steps, then turn sharply to your right. The door in front of you, at the end of the passage. I have left it on the latch." "Then stay down here until I call you. I shall not be long," was Orgelet's final, cynical retort, as he tiptoed toward the stairs. The old woman remained crouching somewhere in a dark angle of the room: Chauvelin, closely followed by Desor, had stepped noiselessly into the room. They watched, fascinated, the movements of the shaft of light that cam.e from the lantern at Orgelet's belt. Up the stairs it travelled, then took a sharp turn to the left, and crept along a short passage: Orgelet's footsteps were noiseless, but presently the watchers heard the soft sound of a door being cautiously opened. followed almost immediately by a loud cry of "Qui va I..."? The old woman gave a smothered cry and buried her face in her hands. Desor, with hands that shook and dripped with moisture, gripped the edge of his companion's coat. Only Chauvelin remained

motionless and unmoved. The first cry had been followed by another: "Voleur! Assassin! The silent, deserted chateau seemed suddenly alive with noise: a tramping of feet overhead, a struggle, another cry.

quickly smothered this time, then a dull thud. After that, silence again.

And a few minutes later the watchers from below saw the tell-tale

He had spoken quite calmly, hardly raising his voice, and yet the sound reverberated like dull thunder through the silence and the gloom.

"I believe you," Orgelet grunted in reply: then added with a cynical laugh: "It was tough work, I can tell you." He was intent on nursing one of his wrists, rubbing it with the palm of his other hand and muttering a coarse oath or else a groan from time to time. The bright eve of his

shaft of light come creeping back, first along the passage, then down

the stairs. Orgelet had done his work.
"Is he dead?" Chauvelin asked.

chattering.

lantern wandered aimlessly from point to point about the room with every movement that he made: one moment it lit up the huddled figure of the old woman, and the next it alighted on Desor's bloated face or on Chauvelin's shrunken figure and pale, thin hands. The

room appeared large, running right through from the veranda at the back of the house to the balcony above the porch in front. The

staircase was somewhere on the left encased in gloom. There was very little furniture about: a horse-hair sofa in one angle, a desk in another: in the centre, a round table, with three or four upright chairs around it.

The old woman had begun to whimper, her teeth could be heard

"Stop that snivelling," Chauvelin broke in impatiently.
"My poor, poor master," she moaned.

"You should have thought of that sooner, my good woman," Chauvelin retorted dryly. "Are you forgetting perchance, that Citizen Orgelet has just put you in possession of a very nice chateau and some valuable

At once the sound of whimpering ceased
"You won't go back on that, Citizen?" she asked.
"Not unless you play me false."

"I won't play you false," the woman said more steadily, even though she could not guite stop the chattering of her teeth. "tell me what to do

land?" he added with a sneer.

and I'll do it."

"It won't be difficult either," Desor grunted. "And what a reward!"

"It is close on nine o'clock now," Chauvelin resumed in curt, incisive tones. "At ten o'clock you will go upstairs into your master's room--"

"Saints in Heaven!" the woman broke in shrilly, "how shall I do that?"

"By thinking, I imagine, of the will which your master has made, leaving all his property to you," Chauvelin replied with a dry chuckle.

will carry a candle, and you need only go as far as the door, but you'll open the door wide and then let yourself sink down on the threshold, as if you were in a faint, and there you will remain until the Commissary of Police arrives on the scene. You understand?"

"That ought to steady your knees as you go up those stairs. Well, you

"The Commissary of Police will question you, and you will tell him that Citizen Orgelet here is your nephew, that he had been doing some work in the stables for your master and had then come in to have

"Yes, ves!" she murmured, "but, my God, how shall I do it?"

supper with you: that your master went up to bed at nine o'clock, and that you and your nephew followed an hour later: that going up the stairs you both heard certain sounds that alarmed you: that you went

"Quite--quite clear, Citizen," the woman muttered feebly. "And what did I do." here broke in Orgelet, with a dry cackle, whilst my respected aunt fainted on the doorstep?" "You overpowered the assassin," replied Chauvelin curtly, "pinioned him to a chair by securing his hands with his belt and his feet with yours, wound your scarf around his mouth then you ascertained that poor Desire Malzieu was dead, and finally ran to the nearest commissariat of police, like the good citizen that you are." "Hm! And the assassin?" "We have him under lock and key. He has been shut up in one of the tower-rooms since Saturday; he will be too hungry to struggle much." "So long as it seems reasonable that I overpowered him and pinned him to a chair, single-handed-- "

to the door of your master's room, found it on the latch, pushed it open, and saw-you understand me?--saw Citizen Malzieu, whom you know well by sight, standing over your master with his two hands around his throat; that you screamed, and Citizen Orgelet rushed forward to apprehend the murderer, after which you must have fainted

for you remember nothing more. Is that clear?"

actor--puny--effete--"

"Then go and fetch the fellow. You'll find him in the ground-floor room of the octagonal tower on this side of the chateau. We must get our mise-en-scene right, eh, Citizen Desor?"

"What? A sturdy, big gossoon like you?--and Fernand Malzieu is an

"I am not objecting, Citizen, if you are satisfied!"

"Are you dreaming, Citizen," Chauvelin said abruptly in that trenchant voice of his which always seemed to contain a menace. "Give your friend Orgelet the key of the tower-room. After which we'll go and set up the scene for the last act of the play."

Silently Desor fumbled in the capacious pocket of his coat and silently he handed a key to Orgelet.

"The ground-floor room in the octagon tower, you said?" the ruffian remarked, and then shuffled across the room toward the veranda. The next moment he had disappeared through the glazed door; his lantern went with him, and the two men and the old woman remained in utter darkness. Orgelet's heavy, dragging footsteps could be heard quite distinctly, first on the wooden flooring of the veranda, then squelching the soft, rain-sodden ground of the pathway round the house. the silence around was death-like; way below the cliffs, the outgoing tide made no sound of breaking surf, or rattle of pebbles on

But Desor did not seem over-inclined to talk. There was something ghoulish in the matter-of-fact way in which Citizen Chauvelin was directing the staging of this grizzly comedy of which he, Desor, was

the principal author.

"Get a candle, woman," Desor said suddenly in a husky voice, "this darkness is enough to choke a man."

"No, no, leave it alone," Chauvelin riposted. "Orgelet will be back directly."

the beach: the rain fell, soft and persistent; soundless, too. The darkness alone seemed to carry sounds within its folds--Orgelet's footsteps, and after awhile the grating of a rusty key in a lock, somewhere in the near distance, and a murmur as of a man's voice.

Somewhere close by a wooden shutter flapped, weirdly, persistently,

presently fell across the veranda floor. "Name of a name of a dog, this is work for beasts, not for man," came from a gruff voice, even as Orgelet reappeared under the lintel of the glazed door. A heavy burden lay right across his shoulders: a ray of light from the lantern in his belt caught the tip of his big nose and the point of his chin covered with a grimv stubble. "Take him upstairs," Chauvelin commanded; "we'll follow." Orgelet muttered a few more oaths, but never thought to disobey. He toiled laboriously up the narrow, winding stairs, with Chauvelin close on his heels, and Desor, dragging Julie Navet by the hand, following on behind.

like the knocking of ahostly knuckles seeking admittance into the house of death, then once again heavy footsteps squelched the muddy path. They sounded heavier, slower, than before. Soon a narrow shaft of light loomed through the darkness: it drew nearer, and

Orgelet paused and deposited his burden on the ground, propping it up against the wall. "I thought I would lock our friend Desire in," he said, with his coarse, callous laugh, "in case the dead took to walking." He took a key out of his pocket, but before inserting it in the lock, he

Outside the door of the room where Desire Malzieu lav lifeless.

looked down on the burden which he had brought on his shoulders all this way from the tower-room. The light from his lantern fell on Fernand Malzieu's pale, wan face; his eyes were open and had a

dull, feverish glow in them, his hair lay matted against his forehead, his mouth and chin were hidden by a woollen scarf wound loosely around his mouth.

Orgelet remarked sarcastically. Then he turned the key in the lock and threw open the door. He took the lantern from his belt and held it high above his head, moving it to and fro to illumine different parts of the room. The light fell on the tumbled bed, the blankets dragged to the floor, the broken crockery and overturned chair, and in the centre of the room the motionless form of old Desire Malzieu lying on his face with claw-like fingers clutching convulsively at the carpet. "A pretty sight, what?" Orgelet remarked with a ghoulish cackle. "What do you think of it, Citizen Chauvelin?" With a cry of impatience Chauvelin snatched the lantern from him and stepped briskly into the room: Desor still dragging the woman by the hand, was hard on his heels. The next moment the door behind them fell to with a loud bang, and the key grated in the lock. A noise as of a hundred demons let loose

"He doesn't look much like a desperate murderer now, does he?"

issued from inside the room, whilst on the other side of the door Orgelet cautiously lifted the inanimate figure of Fernand Malzieu from the ground and once more hoisted him up on his shoulders. Quickly, but as swiftly as he could, guiding himself with one hand to the banisters, and steadying his burden with the other, he hurried down the stairs, across the room, out once more through the glazed door,

then through the veranda back into the open. He skirted the house and crossed the courtyard: here he paused a moment to lend an ear to the shouting, the cursing and the banging that still issued from the top story of the chateau. Quietly chuckling to himself, he re-started on his way, and this time he did not halt until he had reached the path at

the top of the cliffs. Here he came to a standstill, and gently laid his bundle down: then he gave a cry like that of a sea-mew, and thrice repeated it.

point the gentle murmur of the waves rose and fell in rhythmic cadence that was soothing and agreeable to the ear.

Two men emerged now out of the darkness, and Citizen Orgelet called out to them in an extraordinarily cultured and well-modulated

All around the same silence still held swav, only from below at this

"Hastings, is that you?"
"At your command," a pleasant voice gave reply. "Galveston is with

voice and in amazingly perfect English:

me. Have you got your man?"

"You bet I have. But I fear me he cannot walk."
"We have a couple of horses not two hundred metres from here." my

lord Hastings explained, "and we can carry him so far."

"I'll leave him in your hands, then," the pseudo-Orgelet rejoined. "You can take him to his lodgings in the Rue des Moines, number 17, over

against the jeweller's shop at the sign of the opal ring. Give him in charge of his man-of-all-work, and then go at once to the house of the Citizen Doctor Gambier, see Mademoiselle Celeste, his daughter, and tell her the news. After that, meet me at my lodgings. I must get some of this filth off me before I can think of anything else."

He watched my lord Hastings and Sir Richard Galveston while they lifted the still unconscious body of Fernand Malzieu in their arms, and then he waited until these two devoted followers had disappeared in the darkness with their precious burden. After which, he turned on his heel and walked back toward the old chateau.

loving eyes of Celeste Gambier, we men were delighting in the story of this latest adventure of their beloved chief. "I could not resist going back to that old crow's nest," Blakeney was saying gaily, "just to see how that unsavoury rabble was getting on. I was just in time to see the elegant form of my ever-engaging friend Chauvelin silhouetted against the light behind him; he was apparently mentally gauging the distance from the top balcony to the one below and marvelling if he might venture on a jump. He had succeeded in opening the window and the shutter: the door, I imagine, holding fast; it was of oak, very stout, and the lock was good. He was silent as usual: but in the room behind him, his precious mate, Desor, as well as old Desire Malzieu and that abominable had, were making a noise fit to bring all the evil spirits out of Hades." "Old Malzieu was not hurt, then?" one of the young men asked. "Not he!" Sir Percy replied. "You see, what actually happened was this: after poor, little Celeste had confided her anxiety to me, and I had arranged to meet some of you on the cliffs, I put on some rags and set off at once, as you know, for the old chateau. I knew, of course, that poor, unsuspecting Fernand had walked straight into a trap which those devils had set for him. What that trap was I could only conjecture, but I had shot a quessing arrow into the air and it had not fallen wide of the mark. My only fear was that we should be too late, and that I should find the abominable deed already done. The chateau was all in darkness when I arrived, door and windows hermetically closed; but peeping through one of the shutters under the veranda I saw old Desire sitting at the table, having some supper and

waited on by that old hag Julie. Of Fernand I saw no sign. A moment

An hour later in a dingy lodging situated not far from the one where Fernand Malzieu was slowly recovering consciousness under the himself in its darkest angle and waited. I, in the meanwhile, had found cover behind some rough shrubbery from whence I had observed his movements. I give you my word that the whole sinister plan invented by those fiends was by this time as clear as daylight to me. A lurking assassin! A will supposed to have been made in favour of Fernand whose popularity disturbed the complacence of the Terrorists! A charge of wilful murder! Odium cast on the popular actor! The idol of the people turned into an execrated criminal! Well, we had to put a spoke in that abominable wheel or shame the League of the Scarlet Pimpernel for ever. "You know the rest." Blakeney went on lightly. "Skirting the house, I succeeded in effecting an entrance into it by climbing by way of the two balconies up to the top floor window, which luckily was not so securely latched as those on the lower floors. The room which I entered was obviously the master's bedroom: everything was prepared for him for the night. Trusting to luck, I hid

or two later I became conscious that I was not the only night-bird prowling round the old chateau. A bulky, clumsy form was lurking in the shadows, obviously intent on mischief. He, too, like myself, peeped through the shutters of the veranda, then he ensconced

finally the opening of the bedroom door. You can easily guess the rest: whilst Orgelet feil on old Desire Malzieu, who was shouting 'Voleur! Assassin!' fit to wake the dead, I fell on Orgelet, who was so taken by surprise that has never uttered a sound. What with his belt

underneath the bed and waited. After awhile, Desire Malzieu came upstairs. Then came the dramatic moment. What exactly happened in the room below I cannot, of course, tell you. I was just trusting to luck. But presently I heard shuffling footsteps, then voices from below.

taken by surprise that has never uttered a sound. What with his belt and my own and a length of rope which I had stuffed into my pockets, I managed to get him well trussed and silenced and stuffed

I managed to get him well trussed and silenced and stuffed underneath the bed: old Desire was sprawling on the floor, but I did

everything round me and left my face in darkness. After that, the whole thing became child's play. I was sent by Desor to fetch poor Fernand: until that moment I did not know where he was and never had the time or opportunity to look for him. When I first saw him, he was more dead than alive, but we may take it at this moment, under the able ministrations of Mademoiselle Celeste, he is more alive than dead. And so, home, friends," the daring adventurer concluded with his merry. last laugh: "frankly. I am demmed fatigued. At dusk to-

morrow we make for the Day-Dream and set sail for England, and unless the little party's obstinacy prove greater than our determination, we'll have Fernand Malzieu and his pretty Celeste and

possibly old Doctor Gambier on board, too."

not think that he was very grievously hurt. From Orgelet I had taken the dark lantern which proved such a valuable friend, for it lit up

## IN THE TIGER'S DEN

HEAVENS above, the indignation! The entire commune of Bordet was outraged: its rampant patriotism was stirred to its depths. Think of it! That abominable gang of English desperadoes had been at work in the region. Aye! within a stone's throw of Bordet itself. For

Bordet is an important commune, look you! Situated less than half a

dozen leagues from Paris, and possessing a fine chateau which might be termed a stronghold, it had the proud distinction of having harboured important prisoners at different times--aristos, awaiting condemnation and death--when the great prisons of the capital were, mayhap, over-full, or it was thought more expedient to erect a

quillotine on the spot. Thus it was that the ci-devant Bishop of Chenonceaux--a man of eighty who should have known better than to defy the law--and the equally old Cure de Venelle had been incarcerated in Fort St. Arc.

and it was from there, and on the very eve of the arrival of Mme la Guillotine and her attendant executioner on a visit to Bordet, that

department and more keen after spies than a terrier is after rats.

those two old calotins were spirited away under the very nose of Citizen Sergeant Renault, one of the shrewdest soldiers in the

Sergeant Renault was soundly rebuked for what was mercifully

termed his carelessness, and he was ordered off to defy Holland to

rejoin his regiment, there to expiate his misdemeanour by fighting

against the English. And good luck to him, if he came home with all his fingers and toes and the tip still on his nose. The authorities in

Paris, on the other hand, despatched a special officer down to

organization of the police in the district.

Now, if the English spies dared to show their ugly faces in Bordet they would have to deal with Citizen Papillon—a very different man to that fool Renault, whose popularity and reputation had effectually gone down with him. A day or two after the arrival of Papillon, a batch of prisoners were brought to Fort St. Arc: ci-devant priests—contumacious ones, so 'twas understood—from villages over Orleans way, whose crimes against the new laws regulating the administration of religion were too many to enumerate. No wonder that the authorities in Paris required a man of Papillon's shrewdness and enthusiasm to guard these against the possible interference of that master-spy—the mysterious Englishman, known throughout the country as the Scarlet Pimpernel.

Papillon, sitting in state in the Taverne des Trois Rats, surrounded by

Bordet to take over the command of the detachment of National Guard stationed at Fort St. Arc. as well as to supervise the

"And look you," he went on sententiously, "look you, citizens all! It has come to my ears, that there are those among you who, for filthy lucre, have actually lent a hand to those abominable English spies in their treacherous devices against the security of the State. Now, let me tell you this: if I catch any man of you thus trafficking with those devils I will shoot him on sight like a dog!"

And he looked so fierce when he said this, and rolled his eyes so ferociously that many a man felt an icy shiver coursing down his

an admiring crowd of citizens, gave it as his opinion that not the devil himself--so be it there was a devil--could spirit the aristos out of St.

Arc.

spine.
"Therefore," concluded Citizen Papillon, "if any one of you here know

impart such information to me." There was silence after that-silence all the more remarkable as the Taverne des Trois Rats was densely packed with men, all of whom hung spellbound on the irascible sergeant's lips. Citizen Papillon, having delivered himself of such sound patriotic principles, proceeded to guench his thirst, and whilst he did so, the silence gradually broke, firstly into a soft murmur, then into louder whispering: finally a few words were distinguishable above a general hum which sounded now like the buzzing inside a beehive. "Tell him, Citizen Chapeau!" one or two men kept on repeating in a hoarse whisper. "It is thy duty to tell."

aught of the doings of that gang of malefactors, or of the place of their abode, let him come forward now like a man, and a patriot, and

until he came within a few feet of the redoubtable Papillon, where he remained standing, obviously timid and undecided. "Well, Citizen, what is it?" the Sergeant condescended to say in an encouraging tone of voice. "It is--it is that--" the youth answered. Then he suddenly blurted out the whole astounding fact: "It is that I know where the English spies have

Thus admonished and egged on too by sundry prods from persuasive elbows and fists, a tall, ungainly youth slowly worked his way in and out of the forest of tables, chair, and intervening humanity,

"What?" And Sergeant Papillon nearly fell off his chair, so staggered and excited was he. He appeared guite speechless for the moment, nor did Chapeau say anything more: his courage had once more

their night quarters!" he said.

sunk into his sabots. Then someone volunteered the remark:

a mender of boats."

"Well, what of that?" Papillon demanded.

"My father and I have seen strange forms of late prowling about the river bank o' nights," Chapeau said with a swift if transitory return to courage.

Papillon, with characteristic keenness, seized upon these scanty facts, and within a few minutes had dragged from the timid Chapeau all the information he needed.

Chapeau's story was simple enough. Close to the river bank, not a guarter of a league from his father's hut, there was a derelict cottage.

Citizen Papillon would not know it, as he was a stranger in these parts, but everyone in Bordet knew the place and could go to it blindfolded. Eh bien! Chapeau could swear he had seen vague forms

"Citizen Glapeau lives on the outskirts of the commune. His father is

moving about inside the cottage and, in fact—in fact—well, he himself had taken wine and food there once or twice—oh, certainly not more than twice—at the command of a tall foreigner, who might have been an Englishman.

This was neither the place nor the time to deal with Chapeau's misdemeanour in the matter of parleying with and feeding the enemies of the country. Sergeant Papillon for the nonce contented himself with admonishing the delinquent and frightening him into a state bordering on imbecility. After which he turned to his subordinate, Corporal Joly, and fell to whispering with him. It was

expedition against the English spies, and after awhile the agitated throng fled out of the Taverne des Trois Rats and men returned to their homes to ponder over the events which were about to plunge the peaceful commune of Bordet into a veritable hurricane of excitement.

understood that measures were being taken for a nocturnal

## Ш

The derelict cottage which stood with its back to the towpath had no roof; only two of its outside walls were whole, the others, built of mud and stone, had partially fallen in, Inside, the place was littered with debris of plaster and of lath; the front door had gone, leaving a wide.

shapeless gap in its place; the inside walls were partly demolished. and there was no trace of any staircase.

In the shelter of these ruins vaque forms were moving. The night was dark and very still after the rain. The moon was up, but invisible behind a thin veiling of clouds which tempered her light into a grev half-tone that lav over the river like a ghost-like pall and made the

shadows appear almost solid upon the banks. The miscellaneous

noises which during the day filled the immediate neighbourhood of the towpath with life and animation had long since died away: all sounds were stilled in the direction of the boat-mender's workshop some two hundred metres away. All that could be heard now was the soughing of the night-breeze through the reeds or the monotonous drip-drip of lingering raindrops from the branches of the willow trees.

Even the waterfowl and tiny, prowling beasts were at rest, and the lazy river made no sound as she lapped her flat banks with silent somnolence. The men who were sheltering in the derelict cottage did not speak. They were of the type whom a life of adventure and of deadly perils constantly affronted, had endorsed with the capacity for perfect quietude and protracted silences. It is only the idle and shallow-witted

who are for ever restless and discursive. Of time, they took no count: the whole of the night was before them, with its every moment mapped out for action and for thought.

"They should be here by now," he said in a soft whisper, scarce distinguishable from the soughing of the wind among the rushes, "unless the worthy Papillon has changed his mind. You'll have to hold them a good quarter of an hour when they do come," he added, with a pleasant laugh.

A happy chuckle came in response to this command.

He who had first spoken straightened out his tall figure and gazed

Then suddenly one of them spoke:

"When Ffoulkes and I have done our work," he resumed after awhile, "we'll meet as arranged. I don't know how many of us there will be, but we'll do our best."

"I believe that my information is correct," another voice put in guietly.

above the low parapet of broken masonry toward the remote distance where the solid, irregular pile of Fort St. Arc stood out

spectral, almost weird, against the midnight sky.

"There are half a dozen old priests shut up in the topmost story of the tower they call Duchesse Anne."

"Nothing could be better," the chief went on, "as the tower is close to the river and very easy of access. I wonder, now," he added

"I wondered, too," the other assented. "It seems the prisoners were moved in there yesterday."

"Well, so long as we have the boats..."

"We have two: and Hastings is in charge of them, in the backwater iust below the Venelle woods."

detachment off our hands until they are too tired to do more mischief. Ffoulkes and I will have ample time for our work and should certainly be at the back-water before dawn " Before any of the others could give reply, however, he gave a peremptory: "Hush!" then added quickly: "Here they are! Come, Ffoulkes!" To any but a practised ear, the silence of the night was still unbroken: only such men as these, whose senses were keyed up to the presence of danger, like the beasts in the desert or jungle, could have perceived that soft and subtle sound of men stirring far away. A detachment of the National Guard was in truth moving forward stealthily along the towpath and the adjacent fields from the direction of Bordet: their thinly-shod feet made no noise on the soft, rainsodden earth. They crept along, their backs bent nearly double, they carried their muskets in their hands and each man had a pistol in his belt. In the derelict cottage all was silence again. Of the four men who had been there, two had gone. These two were also creeping along under cover of the darkness, but their way lay in the direction of Bordet. They appeared as one with the shadows of the night, which enveloped them as in a shroud. At times they crawled flat on their faces, like reptiles in the ditches, at others they flitted like spectres across an intervening field. When, after awhile, the body of Papillon's men was in their rear, they struck boldly across to the towpath, and thereafter, with elbows held

to their sides, swiftly and with measured tread they ran along towards Fort St. Arc. At a distance of some two hundred metres from the pile

"Then there is nothing more to arrange," the chief concluded, "and so long as you, Tony, and Holte can keep that fool Papillon and his

"What disgusting objects we must look." one of the men said with a quaint, happy laugh, "I yow that confounded mud has even got into my teeth." He drew a scented handkerchief from his pocket and carefully wiped his face and hands. "I wonder," he said, musing, "if it is possible for any man to be guite such a fool as Papillon appears. Well, we shall see." The other, in the meanwhile, had groped his way to a dense portion in the undergrowth, whence after some searching in the dark, he brought out a bundle of clothes. "Hastings has not failed us," he said simply. "And the others will be waiting in the Venelle woods." Whereupon the two men proceeded to divest themselves of the rough and mud-stained garments which they were wearing, and to don the clothes which their friend had laid ready for them. These consisted of uniforms of the National Guard, a disguise oft affected by members of the League of the Scarlet Pimpernel: blue coats with red facings, white breeches and high, black gaiters reaching above the knee, all very much worn and stained.

they halted. A spinney composed of alders, birch, and ash gave them

shelter; the undergrowth below hid them from view.

"Excellent!" the taller of the two men said when he had fastened the last button. "Now, Ffoulkes, remember! You wait below until I give the signal. You have the rope, of course?"

He did not wait for a reply, but started to walk at a quick pace towards the fort. Sir Andrew Ffoulkes. Bart.. one of the smartest

knotted rope wound around his person.

Everything had been pre-arranged. Within a few minutes the two men had reached the edge of the spinney, and the irregular pile of the old fort, with the tower known as the Duchesse Anne in the foreground, rose grim and majestic above them. The Duchesse Anne was an irregular heptagonal tower surmounted by a battlement. There were only two small windows, one above the other, in the facade which fronted the spinney: they were perched high up, close to the battlemented room; one of these windows, the lower one of the two, showed a dim light.

exquisites in London, followed close on his heels, with a heavy-

the irregular roofs and battlements of the fort, some of them in ruins, all of them obviously neglected and disused, rose in irregular masses against the sky. Shallow, rocky slopes, covered with rough grasses and shrubs, led up to the foot of the fort, save where these had been cut into to form a bridge that led to the main entrance portal. The night had become very dark. Heavy clouds were rolling in from the southwest, completely obliterating the moon, and a few heavy raindrops

Above it, to the immediate left, there was a square, flat projection which might have served as a look-out place or a concealing closet. A tiny window was cut into its face. To the right and left of the tower.

Sir Andrew Ffoulkes now wound the knotted rope around his chief's body, and a minute later the latter began his ascent of the slopes. Immediately the darkness swallowed him up. Sir Percy Blakeney, one of the most powerful athletes of his time, was possessed of almost abnormal physique and was as agile as a cat. To him the

climbing of a rough, stone wall did not present the slightest difficulty. Here, a century-old ivy and a stout iron pipe gave him all the help he needed. Within five minutes he was on a level with the lower of the

had begun to fall.

leaving, so Sir Percy ascertained at once, sufficient space for the passage of a human body. The room on which it gave was large and bare. Blakeney, for the space of a second or two, thought it was empty. He seized the iron bar and limbed upon the sil; this gave him a commanding view of the room. It was innocent of furniture, save for one chair, and in the corner, on a level with the window, a table.

two windows—the one which showed a dim light, like a sleepy, halfopen eye, through the darkness clinging with one hand to the ivy and with the other to a stone projection, he peeped in through the window. It was innocent of glass. One bar of iron divided it vertically in two,

their backs, clad in black soutanes, shiny at the seams, threadbare across the shoulders, and the worn soles of their shoes. The men were praying. One of them was reciting a Litany: the others gave the responses.

Without another thought, Sir Percy Blakeney threw one shapely leg

over the window-sill, then the other, and dropped gently down into the

In front of this table, kneeling upon the floor, and with their heads buried in their hands, six men were kneeling. Sir Percy could only see

In one moment the six men were on their feet, with a loud cry of triumph which had nothing priestly in its ring, and through which one voice, hoarse with excitement, rang out commanding and distinct.

"My gallant Scarlet Pimpernel, so then we meet at last!"

## Ш

room.

In less time than that of a heart-beat Sir Percy realized the magnitude of the trap which had been laid for him. In less than one second he saw himself surrounded; at a call from his first assailants, half a

A dozen pairs of hands! No wonder that Chauvelin called to him with a complacent grin.

"I think we have fairly caught you this time, eh, my fine gentleman!"

He looked so evil just then, so cruel and withal so triumphant that Blakeney's imperturbable humour got the better of his grim sense of danger. He threw back his head and a loud, merry peal of laughter woke the echoes of the old fort.

dozen more men had rushed into the room; he felt a dozen pairs of hands laid about his person and heard the cries of exultation and the shouts of derision. He saw the pale eyes of his arch-enemy Chauvelin glistening with triumphant malice as they met his own

across the room.

They thought that he meant to sell his life dearly; one or two of them raised the butt-ends of their pistols, ready to strike the struggling lion on the head. But that struggle was brief. Just once he freed himself from them all. Just once did he send one or two of his assailants, with a mighty blow of his powerful fists, sprawling, half-senseless, against

"By Gad!" he said lightly. "I verily believe, sir, that you have."

a mighty blow of his powerful fists, sprawling, half-senseless, against the wall. Just once did Hebert–Hebert who had a heavy score to settle against the Scarlet Pimpernel–raise a knife, and would have dealt a death-blow to the fighting giant in the back, but it was Chauvelin himself who struck the would-be assassin such a heavy blow on the wrist with his pistol, that the knife fell with a clatter to the ground.

"You fool," he said with a snarl, "this is not the time to kill him."

At that same moment Blakeney raised his hand, and before anyone could intervene he flung something white and heavy with unerring

"You are caught, my fine Scarlet Pimpernel!" Chauvelin kept on repeating in a shrill, excited voice, and rubbed his thin, claw-like hands complacently one against the other "You are caught at last and this time..." He left the sentence uncompleted, but there was a world of vengeful malice in those unspoken words. Quickly enough the end came. One man used the butt-end of his pistol and struck at the lion from behind. The blow caught him at the back of the head and for a moment his senses reeled: whereupon they got him down flat upon the table and tied him to it with the knotted rope which he had about him. Even through half-swooning senses, he was aware of Chauvelin's thin, colourless face thrust close to his own. "Fairly caught, eh, my gallant Pimpernel?" the Terrorist whispered with a malicious chortle; "there are four calotins in the room above and you have fallen like a bird into my trap this time." "Aye! and been trussed like a fowl," Sir Percy gave cool reply. "The

precision and lightning rapidity through the window. But what was one man's strength-even if it be almost superhuman-against the weight

of numbers?

Aye! and been trussed like a row, "Sir Percy gave cool reply." The last time you trussed me like this was on the sands off Calais. On that occasion too you had donned clerical garb, my friend. 'Tis all of good augury."

Chauvelin laughed; he felt secure at last. No more bargaining with the Scarlet Pimpernel. no more parlevings. The guillotine here in the

courtyard of the fort as soon as it could be brought down from Paris. He would send a courier for it at once. In less than twelve hours, it could be here. In the meanwhile, unless indeed supernatural

could be here. In the meanwhile, unless indeed supernatural agencies were at work, there was no fear that this trussed bundle of

Blakeney securely tied to the table, with several metres of rope wound about his body, was as helpless as his most bitter enemy could have wished. For the nonce he seemed to have lost consciousness. He lay quite still, with eyes closed, and slender

hands--the hands of an idealist and of an exquisite--hanging limp and

That was the last vision which Chauvelin had of him as he finally went

anguished humanity could escape out of this trap.

out of the room in the wake of his friends. They took the lantern away with them and left the captured giant in darkness. After which they

nerveless from the wrist.

with them and left the captured giant in darkness. After which they filed out through the door and pushed the heavy bolts home. Even so half a dozen men were left on guard outside: the others quietly went their way, satisfied.

## . .

watch and wait.

How long Sir Percy remained thus pinioned in total darkness, he could not have told you. Time for him had ceased to be. That he had not been altogether blind to the possibility of this danger was proved by the fact that he had a message ready for Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, in his pocket, carefully weighted with a disc of lead. It contained less than half a dozen words and was characteristic both of the man and

his pocket, carefully weighted with a disc of lead. It contained less than half a dozen words and was characteristic both of the man and of his friends, in whom he trusted. The words were "Am helpless. Wait for signal." This message he had succeeded in flinging out of the window before he had been finally overpowered. He was quite convinced in his own mind that if Sir Andrew received the missile, nothing short of death itself would move him from his post. He would

All that prescience could accomplish had therefore been done; from henceforth luck, indomitable will and untiring pluck could alone save

great as they were, in futile attempts to free himself from his bonds. The men, who had set the cunning trap, were not likely to have bungled over the tying of knots; therefore Blakeney, pinioned and helpless, was content to wait and to watch—to watch for this swift passage of fortune—the quaint, old saying in which he had so often professed belief: "Of fortune the wayward god with the one hair upon his bald pate, the one hair which he, who is bold may seize and therewith enchain the god to his chariot."

He waited and listened. No sound came from the other side of the door: the soldiers on guard were probably asleep; but overhead men were stirring; shuffling footsteps moved to and fro across the floor. The old calotins were watching and praying, and he who had set out

this reckless adventurer from the consequence of his own daring.

Indomitable will and pluck—the pluck to wait and to remain quiescent at this moment when the husbanding of strength perhaps meant ultimate safety. He did not struggle, nor did he waste his energies,

to rescue them lay like an insentient log, the victim of a clumsy feint. At thought of this Sir Percy swore inwardly, and his fine, sensitive lips broke into a self-deprecating smile.

But presently he fell asleep.

When he awoke, he did so because the darkness about him had become less dense. The moon had tom a rent in her mantle of

clouds: she peeped in through the window; a shaft of her pale, cold light lay along the floor.

Pinioned as he was, Sir Percy could not do more than slightly raise his head and turn his eves so as to search with cat-like glance the

remotest angles of his prison. Then suddenly his roaming eyes alighted upon an object which lay on the floor just beneath the window. A knife! the one wherewith Hebert had tried to stab him and

had lain all this while--an unseen salvation. Strength? of course it required strength! and pluck and determination! But here was a man who had all three in a more than a human degree. Tied to the table, his arms and legs helpless, he had just his powerful shoulders as a leverage, and to a certain extent his elbows. With their aid he started first a gentle oscillating movement of the table, which was a rickety one, the floor being old too, made of deal planks roughly put together and very uneven. Gradually by regular pressure first with one shoulder and elbow, then with the other, the table rocked more and more: presently it tottered, partly swung back again, staggered again and finally came down with a terrific clatter on the floor, bearing its human burden with it to the ground. A broken arm, leg, or shoulder? Perhaps! The adventurer would not think of that! If he did not succeed in getting out of this, he would be no worse off with a broken limb than he had been before. And there was always the chance! At this moment it meant life to him and to others. The fracas had, of course, roused the soldiers on guard. Sir Percy lying prone now, with the table on top of him, heard them stirring the other side of the door. Anon the bolts were pushed open, the heavy latch lifted. The chance! my God, the chance! The chance of what those miserable soldiers would do when they found the prisoner in such a precarious position. And then there was the knife! My God, do not let them see that knife... and guess! Blakeney lying there, half-

which Chauvelin had knocked out of his colleague's hand. There it

numb with the fall, bruised more than he knew, could just perceive its dim outline in the penumbra less than half a dozen feel: away. There followed a couple of minutes of suspense more agonizing perhaps than any through which the bold Scarlet Pimpernel had gone through this night. He heard the footsteps of the soldiers entering the room. One, two, three of them. One came up close to him, and laughed.

above him. Obviously the soldiers thought so too, looked upon his plight as a huge joke, and laughed and laughed; one of them adding to the joke by kicking the pinioned foe. Then they all retired, and went back to their interrupted sleep. Blakeney heard the violent closing of the door, the grating of the heavy bolts in their socket, then nothing more. The knife still lay there on the ground, not half a dozen feet away, and the moon once more veiled her light behind a bank of grey clouds. To drag himself along the ground with scarcely any noise was still a difficult task, but it was not a superhuman one. Slowly, painfully but surely Blakeney soon lessened the distance between himself and that weapon of salvation. Five minutes later his hand had closed on the knife, and he was rubbing its edge against that portion of the rope which he was able to reach. The labour was arduous and time was speeding on. Darkness had once more become absolute: through

Then the others laughed too. No doubt, the mysterious Englishman, endowed by popular superstition with supernatural powers, looked mightly ridiculous. Iving there upon his face with table legs towering

speeding on. Darkness had once more become absolute: through the open window there came the scent of moisture, and the faint sound of dripping rain upon the ivy-leaves. A distant church-clock struck three—two hours then before the break of dawn!—two hours and there was such a lot more to be done.

A quarter of an hour later the first piece of rope had given way, and the slow process of disentangling it had begun. It required an infinity of patience and above all absolute noiselessness. But it was done in

time. At last the prisoner was free from the rope and he was able gently to crawl away from under the table. A moment later he was at the window peering out in the darkness. A thin drizzle was falling, and the soft, moist air of early morning cooled his burning forehead.

"By God!" he murmured to himself. "May I never be in so tight a hole

Leaning out of the window, he detached a small piece of loose mortar from the outside wall and let it fall into the depth below. At once his keen ear detected the sound of men stirring down there, sitting up, mayhap, to listen, or merely turning over in their sleep.

"They've left nothing to chance," he murmured with a good-humoured

again. All my compliments, my good M. Chauvelin. The trap was magnificently laid. But I was a fool to fall into it. I wonder if there is

anvone down there now--"

listened for a moment; no sound now came from below; whereupon he gave a gentle call, like the melancholy hooting of an owl. It was answered immediately from out of the midst of the spinney, and Blakeney then flung the second message to Sir Andrew—a message of instructions, on the fulfilment of which depended not so much his own life, as that of four helpless, innocent priests.

After which he wound the precious, knotted rope once more around

chuckle. Fortunately, when his enemies brought him down they had not searched through his pockets, so now from an inner one he took a pencil and a tablet, and, blindly, for the darkness was complete, he wrote a long message to his friend. When he had finished, he

his person, threw one leg over the sill, and, a moment later, started to climb once more up the side of the ancient, ivy-covered wall.

Midnight had struck at the church tower of Ste Cunegonde when Sergeant Papillon returned from his expedition to the derelict cottage. After a siege lasting over a guarter of an hour, during which

those satane Englishmen had kept up a wild fusillade from the ruined house and succeeded in putting half a dozen of Papillon's best men hors de combat, the Sergeant had given the order to charge, and the

entirely deserted! It was scoured in every nook and cranny, but not a sign of human life could there be found, nothing but the usual heap of debris, the litter of broken laths, of masonry and scrap-iron. The Englishmen had vanished as if the earth had swallowed them up. Indeed, the silence and desolation appeared spectral and terrifying. And it was in very truth the earth that had swallowed up those mad Englishmen. They must have crept through a disused drain which gave from a back room of the cottage direct into the bank of the river. Here they must have lain perdu half-in and half-out of the water. hidden by the reeds, until the soldiers were busy searching the cottage, when no doubt they made their way, under cover of the reeds, and along the bank to a place of safety. Papillon had been obliged to leave the wounded in the derelict cottage and had returned somewhat crestfallen, glad to find that his discomfiture was not counted against him. In very truth he could not guess that his expedition had succeeded over-well in its object, which was to throw dust in the eyes of that astute Scarlet Pimpernel by persuading him that here were a lot of louts and fools whom it was mighty easy to hoodwink. Since then the mysterious Englishman had been captured and was now lying a helpless prisoner in one of the topmost rooms of the Duchesse Anne. There was nothing to fear from him. The English spy, completely helpless, was so well guarded,

men had, indeed, boldly rushed into the place--only to find the cottage

from him. The English spy, completely helpless, was so well guarded, that not a host of his hobgoblins could trick his warders now. A dozen men outside his door, he himself little more than an insentient log, and a good watch at the foot of the tower! What cabalistic power was there to free him from it all? Chauvelin, Hebert and the other Terrorists--all members of the Committee of Public Safety, who looked strangely out of the picture in their clerical garb, with the

tricolour sash peeping out beneath their soutanes–finally retired satisfied, leaving Papillon and the men whom he had brought back with him on duty in the guard-room for the night. They would be

It all occurred when the church-clock of Ste Cunegonde was striking four. Some of the soldiers had been relieving the tedium of the night by playing dominoes, others by recounting the legendary adventures which popular belief ascribed to the mysterious Scarlet Pimpernel. All around, the place was still. It was good to think of that turbulent Englishman lying so still and helpless in the room above. Then

relieved one hour before break of dawn.

report of a musket-shot, and before Papillon and his men could collect their somewhat sleepy senses the passage and vestibule outside the guard-room, as well as the courtyard beyond, were filled with awesome sounds of men shouting, of hoarse commands, of cries, objurgations and curses. Papillon stepped out of the guard-

suddenly the voice of the sentry rang with a quick challenge through the silence of the night. It was immediately followed by the sharp

room. In a moment the confused hubbub was changed into the one terrifying phrase repeated by a number of rushing, gesticulating men: "The Englishman has escaped!"

"Where? How?"

But nobody could say for certain. The facts appeared to be that the sentry at the bridge-head had heard a sound, and seen a man running from the direction of the river. Both the sentinels fired, but in

the darkness they missed their man. Just then the detachment of National Guard, who had come from their headquarters at Bordet to relieve Papillon, came into view at the bridge-head. With them was one of the members of the Committee of Public Safety, still in his clerical garb and with the tricolour scarf gleaming beneath his

soutane. He shouted a peremptory order: "After him, Citizen Soldiers! or by Satan your heads shall pay for it, if the Englishman escapes!" This order the sentry dared not display seeing whence it

escapes!" This order the sentry dared not disobey, seeing whence it came, and both the men immediately gave chase, aided by those

But beyond that no one knew anything definite, and presently the question was raised: "Had the Englishman really escaped?" This, Sergeant Papillon set out immediately to ascertain. A winding stone staircase leads from the vestibule into the tower. He went up, followed by his own men, while the relief guard remained in the vestibule. No sooner, however, had the last of the Sergeant's men disappeared round the bend of the stairs, than these newcomers silently and without haste filed out of the vestibule, crossed the narrow courtyard, the entrance portal and the bridge, and a minute later had disappeared amidst the undergrowth of the spinney. Stealthily, warily. but with unerring certainty they made their way through the thick scrub, striking inland first then immediately behind St. Arc and back toward the river. They had thus walked in a complete semi-circle around the fort, and reached that portion of it which consists of a hollow, ruined tower rising sheer out of the water and abutting on the battlemented roof of the main building. "Now," said one of the men in a quick whisper, "we should soon be seeing Blakeney up there, and those poor old priests being lowered by him from the roof." Hardly were the words out of his mouth than the melancholy cry of an owl came softly sounding from the battlements above. "And here he is! God bless him!" came fervently as if in unison from the hearts of the others. Blakeney had succeeded in the task which he had set out to do. He had climbed into the room under the roof where four unfortunate

who had been on guard at the foot of Duchesse Anne.

the ceiling and getting out upon the roof. With the help of the table, the chairs, and the precious rope, he contrived to aid these four unfortunates to escape from their hideous prison. They were sturdy country-folk, these old priests, and did not shrink from perilous adventure, encouraged as they were by a kindly voice and helped along by a sure and firm hand. And whilst the Duchesse Anne tower, the staircases, vestibule and courtyard of the fort were singing from end to end with shouts, and words of command, with curses and derisive laughter, the Scarlet Pimpernel, in a remote corner of the fort which the tumult and confusion had not vet reached carefully lowered his four old proteges down from the roof into the arms of his friends. Quietly he did it. without haste and without delay, but aided by the members of his league not one whit less devoted, less resourceful than he. There were just five minutes in which the work of rescue had to be done; after which the confusion and the search would spread to this lonely spot, and the noble act of self-sacrifice would have been offered up in vain. But it was all accomplished in the time, and soon the little party, under cover of that darkest moment which comes just before the dawn, were speeding up the river bank toward the Venelle woods, where in a lonely backwater one of their gallant band of heroes was waiting for them with the boats. The chief was the last to step into the boat, and as the others began to row, and the four old priests reverently whispered a prayer of thanksgiving to God, he looked with eyes curiously filled with regret

priests had been imprisoned, preparatory to their being sent to death, for the crime of adhering to their religion and administering it in the way they believed the Divine Master had taught them to do. Their gallant rescuer had soon found a means of breaking through

on the grim pile that stood out vaguely silhouetted against the darl sky.
"By Gad!" he murmured with an entirely happy little laugh. "I would no have missed this night's adventure for a fortune. I am quite sorry to go."
The End