



# The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel

*Emmuska Orczy*

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## **The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel** Emmuska Orczy

More adventures amongst the terrors of revolutionary France. No one has uncovered the identity of the famous Scarlet Pimpernel - no one except his wife Marguerite and his arch-enemy, citizen Chauvelin. Sir Percy Blakeney is still at large however, evading capture.

## **The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel Details**


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Author : Emmuska Orczy

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## **From Reader Review The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel for online ebook**

### **Delynn Bodine says**

Great book - very clever.

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### **H.Friedmann says**

A series of short stories about the exploits of the Scarlet Pimpernel. Entertaining, but much the same as the others. My favorite was one told from the perspective of a third party. Orczy did a good job of making the stories build on each other. You learn an identity in one story, and that knowledge is key in the next. Made it feel more like reading a novel instead of a series of short stories. I have to admit that I have grown out of the Scarlet Pimpernel a little bit. They were something I loved in my tweens, but now it's a bit repetitive. However it's taken until now to find some of the novels. You know over the years I've sought him here, I've sought him there, this reader's sought him everywhere. :)

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### **Melinda says**

The Scarlet Pimpernel is both a flower of five crimson petals and an English Lord named Percy Blakeney, who uses that code name in France to smuggle aristocrats and their families away to safety from the French Revolution and the guillotine, into England. The first novel The Scarlet Pimpernel is considered a classic of page, stage and screen, even though originally, the play and book were produced by the Hungarian Baroness Orczy and her British husband. Publishers wouldn't publish the book; the critics hated it, yet the public loved both the play and the book. The charming, crafty Pimpernel outwitting the the bloodthirsty principals of the Revolution was high entertainment. So, the Scarlet Pimpernel series of books and movies began.

In this variant, instead of being independent and singlehandedly getting families and people out of France, the Scarlet Pimpernel has a league of English gentlemen he works with. The Scarlet Pimpernel is the head of the league, reporting to the Prince of Wales. He stays in France, switching between his many disguises and hideouts, finding aristos in need of export. The league works with him, helping fool the Committee for Safety in ingenious ways and smuggling people out of France.

These books are a series of vignettes where the Scarlet Pimpernel goes against Chauvelin, the head of the Committee for Safety - which controls the guards, the spies, the jails, the Surete and the guillotine. Years have passed since the Revolution and the riots, but the guillotine is still active full time. The Pimpernel is a now almost more a legend than a man to the Committee of Paris. The Pimpernel has made fools of them, and yet he is like a ghost; making aristos disappear from prison, guarded rooms and from ambushes. He can't be human, yet it keeps happening. To Chauvelin, he is public enemy number one.

In these eleven short stories, the Pimpernel is a combination of Sherlock Holmes, William Windham (his real life counterpart), John Steed and Michael Westin (without weapons). A master of disguise, strategy, tactics and human nature, he can bluff, confuse, misdirect and mislead the hordes of officials who are feverishly dreaming about his capture.

Each story is different and highly entertaining. Good for a quick, fun read. The older grammar and vocabulary is charming. I've never heard of a dirty old man described as indign in my life, but it happens here. Amazing...

Just so you know, the Scarlet Pimpernel theme:

We seek him here, We seek him there!

Chauvelin seeks him everywhere!

Is he in Heaven? Is he in H-'ll?

That demned, elusive Pimpernel

Highly Recommended for Historical and Holmes fans...

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### **Els says**

\*sighs, shovels yet another book on the RTC pile \*

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### **Cedar Lea says**

Overall, this was an interesting compilation of stories about the League of the Scarlet Pimpernel, a band of Englishmen who rescued aristocrats and other unfortunate souls who were destined for the guillotine during the French Revolution.

I really enjoyed reading this book as I started, but about halfway through, my interest started to wane a bit. The stories become a bit repetitive - they all can be summarized to have a similar plot. There is some unfortunate soul being terrorized by the Committee of Public Safety. All seems to be lost, until the Scarlet Pimpernel comes up with an elaborate plan to rescue them, always using some form of disguise to trick the villains and rescue the victims. I pretty much skimmed the second half of the book. :)

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### **Amy says**

A collection of short stories, the only reason this book doesn't get my usual adoring five stars is it got kind of...predictable. While the costumes are truly genius and clever, it was *always* Percy. Eventually I grew somewhat bored. Every now and then a story would pop that would save it from three stars, and I would certainly recommend it to Scarlet Pimpernel fans, but I wouldn't call it the best work of Orczy.

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### **dragonhelmuk says**

I didn't like this quite as much as the first book I'm afraid, but it was quite well written in places. It also brings to mind Objectivism quite strongly in some places! Three quotes:

(Baronness Orczy gives a rare depiction of a girl who dances on the streets as dejected instead of sexy. I

think this would have been much easier for people of the time with a class consciousness to understand, than today, where a gender consciousness seems to have completely taken hold.)

a woman almost unsexed by misery, starvation, and the abnormal excitement engendered by daily spectacles of revenge and of cruelty. They were to be met with every day, round every street corner, these harridans, more terrible far than were the men. This one was still comparatively young, thirty at most; would have been good-looking too, for the features were really delicate, the nose chiselled, the brow straight, the chin round and small. But the mouth! Heavens, what a mouth! Hard and cruel and thin-lipped; and those eyes! sunken and rimmed with purple; eyes that told tales of sorrow and, yes! of degradation. The crowd stood round her, sullen and apathetic; poor, miserable wretches like herself, staring at her antics with lack-lustre eyes and an ever-recurrent contemptuous shrug of the shoulders. The woman was dancing, contorting her body in the small circle of light formed by a flickering lantern which was hung across the street from house to house, striking the muddy pavement with her shoeless feet, all to the sound of a be-ribboned tambourine which she struck now and again with her small, grimy hand. From time to time she paused,

(Someone who refuses to submit to the wishes of a villain just because they threaten harm - I'm sure the objectivists would love the Baroness)

he chooses to declare that it is I who, by rejecting his love, drove him to these foul extremities. May God forgive him that abominable lie! The evil we do, Monsieur, is within us; it does not come from circumstance.

(Perhaps this book is now a little bit out of its time...)

Esther was no fool, nor was she unsophisticated. These were not times when it was possible for any girl, however carefully nurtured and tenderly brought up, to remain ignorant of the realities and the brutalities of life. Even before Merri had put his abominable proposition before her, she knew what he was driving at. Marriage— marriage to him! that ignoble wretch, more vile than any dumb creature! In exchange for her life!

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## **Melinda says**

### **Outfoxing Chauvelin during the French Revolution**

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## Tom says

*The League of The Scarlet Pimpernel* is/was a great book. There's no denying it that. It's a fantastic collection of short stories that leave me baffled in much the same way as *Sherlock Holmes*, not to mention that it has the same "air" to it, insane enemies, daring escapes, just about everything that could make a 93-year-old book entertaining.

The main character, whom the book is named after, is an alias assumed by Sir Percy Blakeney, a wealthy English gentleman, who seems to have a soft spot for interfering in the affairs of the insane French Revolutionaries. All of the stories included involve Sir Percy and his daring and fearless League rescuing various 'Aristocrats' or 'enemies of the Republic' from the clutches of the Committee of Public Safety, who are MUCH more menacing than the name leads on.

**Summary** : *There are spoilers below: please be wary of the "view spoiler" buttons.*

I - Sir Percy Explains -----

The first story of the eleven contained in this book, is *Sir Percy Explains*, which is ironic, because Sir Percy really doesn't do a whole lot of explaining. Madeleine Lannoy, who is labeled as an "aristo" by the Committee, is driven to becoming a street dancer in the worst neighborhoods of Paris after her only son is captured by the diabolical Jean Paul Marat, for "'daring to turn a deaf ear to the indign passion of a brute!(23)'" *In modern English, Mrs. Lannoy rejected Marat, and he took revenge by kidnapping her son for*

him to live "in the company of all that is most vile and most degraded in the disease-haunted slums of indigent Paris (22)."

(view spoiler)

## II - A Question of Passports -----

Bibot was a patriot if there ever was one. He apparently hated aristocrats and the like so much, he was given the most important military post in the city of Paris, *Porte Montmartre*, which was also the most illegal traffic-heavy gate in the city. The last guard, Ferney, had let some traitors through the gate unaware of their identities, and was guillotined for his ignorance. Not too great of an impression to start your first day with: *you fail, you die*. But that wouldn't scare Bibot! No, "he feared no devil, nor any Englishman. Had the latter the strength of giants and the protection of every power of evil, Bibot was ready for him (187)."

To further stress the importance of this post, Jean Paul Marat himself gives Bibot his orientation. He even warns Bibot that the Scarlet Pimpernel is planning rescue the Duc and Duchesse de Montreux and ten of their closest friends from the Guillotine that night. "The two men sat in a tavern, opposite the gate of Montmartre, with a bottle of wine between them... (195)"

(view spoiler)

## III - Two Good Patriots -----

This is probably the shortest of the short stories, weighing in at only 19 eBooks pages, and is told from the perspective of Fanny Roussel, a "respectable married woman, and as good of a patriot as any of you sitting there (224-225)." She and her husband are being sent to the guillotine for being accused of housing and aiding the Scarlet Pimpernel.

The house in which the couple lived was too far away from the port to attract travellers, so the only time the

house was crowded was mid-day, when people would stop in on the way to or from port. One day, as the husband was putting up the shutters, someone came up to the house and knocked on the door. (view spoiler)

#### IV - The Old Scarecrow -----

"Nobody in the quartier could quite recollect when it was that the new Public Letter-Writer first set up business at [the corner] of the Rue Dauphine, but he certainly was there... when Agnes... with a look of dreary despair (244-245)" came into the Lepine's 'office'.

"They say, citizen, that you alone in Paris know the whereabouts of the English milor'- of him who is called the Scarlet Pimpernel (251)... I know that you [are] the intermediary (253)."

(view spoiler)

#### V - A Fine Bit of Work -----

The Lenegre family is in a bit of a predicament. The son, Pierre, was a footman in the house of Marie Antoinette. "His crime had been that he remained loyal to her in words as well as in thought (319)." The Committee of Public Safety had marked him as a person of interest (in other words, he was dead to them.). He would've been beheaded, if not for the Pimpernel and his League of valiant gentlemen. The father, Pere, is then suspected because of his son's escape from "justice".



Percy, who visits the house, gave Pere the order to hide in a violin maker's house, where he would be safe. As if the stress of hiding Pere wasn't enough, the women of the house, petite maman (the mother) and Rosette (the daughter) were horribly worried that Sir Percy himself was in danger.

(view spoiler)

(What would be XII) - Conclusion -----

(and yes, I did skip the remainder of the stories. THANK YOU MR. VAWTER. They wouldn't fit in the 20,000 character limit, anyway.)

*The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel* was a fantastic book/collection of short stories, and I'm really glad that I decided to read it. Throughout the book, there's the constant theme of Good V.S. Evil, which almost always boils down to the Scarlet Pimpernel (good) V.S. the government of France (evil). In the first, second, fourth, fifth, sixth,... you get the idea, this was the case, albeit in various forms, throughout all of the stories, except the third, where the Pimpernel was more the villain, and the Roussells as the 'good' side, or at least it was portrayed that way.

The whole bit about the theme wasn't that surprising to me, as most of the books from this era seem to have that system down, (*I'm looking at you, Holmes!*) and the spy part of the stories seem to be popular in that time, as Holmes did quite a bit of spying in his adventures, too.

This was a very good book/story collection/iBook/whatever you want to call it, but for the price of \$0.00, this book was excellent. A great prelude to the original *Scarlet Pimpernel*, I thank my English teacher for recommending it, and copyright laws for making this the best free book I've ever read.

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## **Perry Whitford says**

Eleven short stories featuring that '*demmed, elusive Pimpernel*' and friends, donning disguises and saving aristocrats from Madam Guillotine and those supplying her with heads.

Always on the look out for the insouciant Englishman are the rabble of the sans-culottes, the Committee of Public Safety, and that blood-thirsty organizations wiliest official, citizen Chauvelin.

Unfortunately, Sir Percy's arch-enemy and principle dupe only appears in three of the tales, the first one and the final two. In that opening story, Orczy rather cleverly places her hero at the side of the bath immediately following the murder of Jean Paul Marat.

Other highlights include a brief appearance from Robespierre, a couple of first-person narratives from those hoodwinked by the Pimpernel at close quarters, and a trio of stories to round things up where the master of disguise coughs and splutters about as a consumptive old codger called Rateau.

No great shakes, but it's hard not to enjoy Orczy's zesty style and the blurted oaths of those befuddled by the Pimpernel.

*"Name of a dog!"*

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### **Sharon says**

This book takes place during the Reign of Terror in France. While the Committee of Public Safety is working to guillotine supporters of the aristocracy, the Scarlet Pimpernel and his associates are working even harder to save them and spirit them out of France to safety in England. Although the book becomes somewhat repetitious, I did enjoy it and would recommend it.

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### **Alysen says**

This was a good book. Not as good as *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, which is a personal favorite but a good read. This gives you short stories of some of the adventures and still fun read.

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### **Jim Puskas says**

Despite having published a dozen novels based on the exploits of her fanciful "Pimpernel" character, Orczy still chose to pen a set of short stories on the same theme. Whatever charm and entertainment may have brightened her original works certainly had grown stale by the time this collection was written. The plots are so patently absurd and the social commentary so one-sided as to overwhelm any sense of adventure left in the stories.

The wretched excesses, corruption, venality and mindless brutality of the men who quickly turned the French Revolution into their own blood-soaked orgy is well known; but I found myself gagging on Orczy's wistful admiration of the old aristocracy whose abuses triggered the whole mess in the first place. Pimpernel and his minions have long outstayed their welcome.

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### **Tricia Mingerink says**

It took me a lot longer to work through this one than it did the other ones. Mainly, I think, because I ran out of Librivox recordings done by Karen Savage (who is excellent) and the readers on this Librivox recording weren't all that great. It was done by several readers, and I just couldn't stand some of them.

This book is actually a collection of fairly long short stories about the Scarlet Pimpernel. They are all pretty much him easily out-smarting Chauvelin. They are just fun stories that really give a sense of what the Scarlet Pimpernel's day-to-day adventures in between his really big, hair-raising escapades that are in the other books. Because of that, these books have more of the rest of the *League of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, especially Andrew Fawkes, and Marguerite isn't in it besides a few references to her. I loved the dynamic between Fawkes and Sir Percy. In the other books, they aren't together much, and it is sometimes hard to see the closeness of their friendship. It comes out really clearly in these short stories how much Fawkes is his right hand man.

My favorite of these short stories was The Scarecrow. Absolutely hilarious at one point!

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**Rod Innis says**

Another great book about the Scarlet Pimpernel

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