Probably one of the better novels in the whole Scarlet Pimpernel series. *El Dorado* is the fourth novel written by the Baroness Orczy. Although it was her fourth adventure, the story actually fits in as number ten in the timeline. This story occurs after the marriages of Sir Andrew and Lord Tony and after the adventures in Calais (The Scarlet Pimpernel) and Boulogne (The Elusive Pimpernel.) This adventure of the Pimpernel chronicles Sir Percy's efforts to rescue the crown prince of France. This child is known as the Dauphin.

The story opens with Armand St. Just, the Scarlet Pimpernel's brother-in-law, attending a night at the opera in Paris. On his way, he encounters Baron de Bartz, a known royalist. The two discuss the political challenges of the time and the fate of the unfortunate King and Queen. Both have been guillotined by this time. During this conversation, the Baron tells Armand he is making plans to rescue the young Dauphin. Although Sir Percy has not come out with his plan, Armand is sure that "they", meaning the league, are making similar plans to free the child.

This news worries the Baron since there is money to be made if the child is returned to Austria. While the two try to politely reach their own ends (the Baron wants more information on the Pimpernel's plans, and Armand wants to make a graceful exit,) the young St. Just is bewitched by a young actress on the stage below. The Baron quickly picks up on this interest and offers to introduce him. Love-struck, Armand cannot resist the offer.

The meeting of Armand St. Just and Jeanne Lang sets the conflict of El Dorado rolling. In his craftiness, the Baron pays a visit to Citizen Heron, the jailer at Temple, the prison where the young king is being held. He tells the raucous jailer that he knows that the Scarlet Pimpernel is in Paris and is planning to free his most prized prisoner. An arrogant Heron assures the Baron that the child is quite safe in his prison. To ensure his own safety the Baron tells Heron about the love-struck follower of the Pimpernel and the actress. He gives Heron her address and leaves him to arrest Armand St. Just.

Against his better judgment, Armand does pay a visit to Mademoiselle Lang. During his visit, both he and Jeanne fall madly in love with one another. When Heron arrives to arrest Armand, Jeanne puts on a show worthy of the Scarlet Pimpernel himself. A grateful Armand promises her safety in England.

But Armand's passion for Jeanne proves to be a dangerous liability to Sir Percy and his league. Even after Percy swears to protect Jeanne, a hot-blooded Armand devises a way to save her himself. The brash decision leads to one of the most dangerous mind games Sir Percy has ever played with Chauvelin. The delicate balancing act of saving both the King of France and Armand with Jeanne in tow proves to have its unique challenges.

Fans who enjoy the devotion of Marguerite and Percy will find this novel very rewarding. Any reader who has an emotional investment in the Pimpernel saga will find themselves glued to the impossible task given to Sir Percy. Even the heartbreaking subplot of Jeanne and Armand keeps the reader wondering if the couple can ever find happiness. As a side note, Citizen Chauvelin gets a chance to get a one-up on his arch-nemesis. The complex structure of this adventure has the makings of a great opera. *El Dorado, an Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel* is a huge dramatic milestone in a beloved series many have come to know and love. Recommended.