The SCARLET RUNNER

Dramatized and produced by the Vitagraph Company from the popular novel of the same name by C. N. and A. M. Williamson. Everything you read here today you can see this week at leading motion-picture theaters in vivid motion pictures, with Earle Williams as Christopher Race and Miss Zena Keefe as Sidney Chester. Next week another story and new pictures.

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The Disguised Conspirators Hold up The Messengers

CHAPTER VII.

The Red-Whiskered Man.

"WHAT a queer place for a rich man's relatives to live!" thought Christopher, looking up in a puzzled way at the tall, dilapidated house in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, in front of which he stopped Scarlet Runner.

Christopher, who by special arrangement and extra payment had brought the motor across from England on the night boat to the Hook of Holland, had spun along good clinker roads, bowling his car and his one passenger into Amsterdam in time for a late breakfast. That meal he had taken at a hotel, while his employer (unknown to him a few hours before) had driven off in a cab to the house of a relative, who was expected to join the party for a week's run through Holland. Instructions were that, after breakfast and a couple of hours' rest, Christopher was to call at a certain address.

Here he was, then, in front of the house, an ancient, secretive-looking building that nodded forward as if its time to tumble into ruin might come at any moment; and a vague suspicion of mystery in his errand suddenly stole into Christopher's mind.

The young man who had engaged him and the Scarlet Runner—the young man with the features, bearing and manner of an Englishman, the accent of Oxford, and the name of a Dutchman, Van Cortlandt—had seemed frankness itself. He had insisted (as he was a stranger to Christopher and the car was to be taken out of England) upon paying £50 in advance. He had been an agreeable companion during the run, showing himself a cosmopolitan in knowledge of the world, of literature and of drama. Christopher was inclined to like and admire his passenger, and fancied that the Dutch cousin to be visited in Amsterdam would turn out a merchant prince. Yet this was the cousin's house; the hour appointed and passed, and young Mr. van Cortlandt seemed in no hurry to appear with his relative.

It was a house, Christopher told himself, where things might happen; and wasn't it, now he came to think of it, a little odd that Van Cortlandt had asked him to wait without sending in word or announcing his presence in any way?

When he had sat in front of the house for a quarter of an hour, Christopher stopped the motor; and it was just after he had done this that the door opened and a girl came out. She wore a blue tissue veil draped over her hat, and the long ends fluttered gracefully behind her in the slight breeze. She was dressed in a neat, inconspicuous tailor suit of dark gray, and carried in her hand a roll of music in a leather case. Perhaps it was vanity on Christopher's part, but he fancied that the large eyes glimmering alluringly through the veil rested upon Scarlet Runner with interest and even curiosity. He watched the girl as she walked to the corner, and at the end of the street saw her hail a cab. Immediately afterwards a man who had been staring aimlessly at the bottles in a cheap hairdresser's shop on the other side of the way became abruptly aware that he had been wasting time. He hurried off briskly in the direction the girl had taken and also found a cab, so promptly as to suggest the idea that it had been waiting his orders.

"Doesn't look like the sort of fellow who could afford to drive," Christopher said to himself fainly interested, and so forgetting his own affairs for the instant that it was a surprise suddenly to see Mr. Ean van Cortlandt standing in the street.

How he had got there Christopher was not sure, but one thing was certain; he had not come out of the building in front of which Scarlet Runner had been waiting for nearly half an hour. There was a vague impression in the mind of Scarlet Runner's owner that his employer had run down the steps of a house two doors farther on, but his thoughts had been so occupied with the doings of others at the instant that he could not have sworn to this had it been to save his life or Van Cortlandt's.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting," said the other. "It was unavoidable." He paused for a moment, evidently having something more he wanted to say and not knowing how best to say it.

"And I'm sorry too," Mr. van Cortlandt went on, "that all my plans are changed. My cousin, who was to have gone with me on this motor trip, can't go—family affliction, something quite sudden; and that being the case, I feel it would be hard-hearted, as well as gloomy, to make the tour without him. However, you shan't suffer in any way by the change, Mr. Race, for matters between us shall stand exactly as if I'd been using your car for the next week, as arranged; but I've made up my mind to turn round and go back to England today, after all."

Christopher was surprised, but he showed no astonishment. He merely regretted, civilly, that there was trouble in Mr. van Cortland't family and disappointment for Mr. van Cortlandt himself.

Nothing could have been pleasanter or more friendly than the manner of the two young men in discussing the situation; nevertheless, Christopher had a strong, if inexplicable, conviction that, in some way and for some reason thus far incomprehensible, he had been a tool in the hands of the other; that no sudden affliction had befallen the Amsterdam relatives of Mr. van Cortlandt, and that Mr. van Cortlandt had never really intended to take the trip he professed to abandon with so much reluctance.

"We will go back now to your hotel, and pick up the suitcase which I asked you to leave there until my plans were settled," said Van Cortlandt. "There ought to be time for lunch, too; but as we have to arrange for the shipping of the car tonight I don't want any contretemps, and I think we'd better order plenty of food and drink to take on board the car, and eat by the way whenever we feel inclined."

Christopher turned the proposal over in his head, but could make nothing mysterious of it; nor had he got hold of any further clue by the time Scarlet Runner had landed them at the door of the old-fashioned Bible Hotel.

When they had arrived there, he expected his passenger to go in and see to the fetching of the suitcase, which, from the first, Christopher had ventured to think rather scanty provision for a week's tour. But Van Cortlandt had a different idea. He suggested that, as Race had arranged for the disposal of the luggage, he had better be the one to ask for it now; otherwise there might be a misunderstanding. Also he was to order something to eat and drink on the journey. Christopher agreed, wondering, half humorously, half anxiously, if the plot consisted in making off with Scarlet Runner during his absence.

During one of the moments when Christopher's attention was diverted from his best-beloved possession, Mr. Van Cortlandt left his seat and began examining the car with frank interest. His back was turned to the door of the hotel, where Christopher stood guard, but when the owner of the car came hurriedly out, accompanied by a porter with the suitcase and a waiter with a neat parcel, the passenger was peering into the petrol tank. "You're sure there isn't rather a queer smell?" he inquired. "I thought as we came there was a bad carburation, or something."

Christopher, quick in defense of his darling, denied the bad carburation, and explained to the amateur that, even if it had existed, the petrol in the tank could have nothing to do with it.

They had an uneventful drive to the Hook. Christopher, who intended, as a matter of course, to guard the car on board the boat, expected that his passenger would take a cabin and rest during the passage, which promised to be disagreeable owing to the steamy, unseasonable heat of the weather. But Van Cortlandt would not hear of leaving his chauffeur to get through the night alone. This would not be "sporting," said he; and the two spent the seven hours of the voyage together, never for the second out of sight of Scarlet Runner.

It was the gray, misty dawn of a mid-August day when the boat slowed into harbor. The passengers looked shadowy and anxious as ghosts who had just been ferried across the Styx. Christopher and his companion had not seen any of their fellow sufferers during the night, as they had got on board earlier than the others, on account of the car. As they were somewhat out of the way of the passing crowd, and could not leave the ship until every one else had gone, they would in all probability have got off as they had got on, without meeting a soul, had not a young woman, with a modest air of wishing to escape observation, flitted out of the way of the passengers pressing up from the cabins.

She wore a neat, dark gray tailor suit; her hat was draped with a blue tissue veil which fell over and covered her face, and she carried in her hand a leather-cased roll of music.

"By Jove!" muttered Van Cortlandt under his breath; and instantly it was clear to Christopher that he was not alone in recognizing the pretty girlish figure.

Race kept silence; but the other started forward and, without joining the girl, approached near enough to call her in a low voice without being heard by any of the more distant passengers. Watching intently, Christopher saw her start, peer anxiously through the blue cloud of her veil (which she did not lift), and then flit quickly up to Van Cortlandt. Evidently it was as great a surprise for her to see him as it was for him to find her on board. But they talked together in whispers, speaking with intense earnestness, the girl's back turned to the groups of passengers who stood or moved about on deck.

Among these, however, was an elderly, spectacled man, with old-fashioned side whiskers, turning gray from sandy red, while shaggy brows and lank hair matched in color the grizzled, reddish bunches on his thin cheeks. He wore a soft felt hat, which looked as if he had slept in it, and an overcoat so much too heavy for the heat of the weather that he must have suffered from its weight. Separating himself from the line of passengers forming to leave the ship, he strolled towards the retired spot where Van Courtlandt and the girl in the blue veil were talking together. Then suddenly his eyes behind his spectacles lighted upon Van Cortlandt's face and lingered for an instant, his expression changing.

It was at this moment that Christopher became aware of the man's existence. He saw him glance at Van Cortlandt and turn away with some slight suggestion of haste; but evidently Van Cortlandt had recognized in him another acquaintance. The face of his employer was turned from Christopher, but the quick start forward he made told its own tale.

"Jacobs, is it possible?" Christopher heard Van Cortlandt ask.

The other man hesitated as if unwilling to answer, and Van Cortlandt spoke again sharply. "Surely you recognize me? Surely you know who I am?"

"I—suppose so," the stranger admitted at last.

"Then in heaven's name, tell me—in the name of all the demons—why you, too, are on board this boat, when you ought——"

But Race caught no more. The sandy-whiskered man moved closed to Van Cortlandt, and the two fell into earnest conversation, to which the girl listened without joining in.

By this time the boat was moored and the people beginning to go off. Presently no one was left save Scarlet Runner's owner, her late passenger, and that passenger's two new-formed acquaintances. As the last group crowded the gangway Van Cortlandt came to Race, leaving the girl and the elderly man standing together.

"I suppose you won't mind carrying three of us instead of one?" he said. "A young lady I know has unexpectedly turned up, and a man with whom I've had some business dealings. I had no idea they were on board with us until I saw them this morning. In fact, it's only a series of accidents that they are not somewhere else. But being here, and both bound for London, if you don't object I would like to take them on the car. They have nothing with them except hand luggage."

Christopher answered that Scarlet Runner would not feel the difference between two passengers and four, and as soon as the car was on dry land and ready to start the newly arranged party boarded her. Formerly Van Cortlandt had sat beside the driver, and such luggage as the two young men carried was in the tonneau. But now the old man was placed in front with Christopher and Van Cortlandt was the girl's companion in the tonneau, the big kit-bag and suitcase being put on the roof.

Neither of the new occupants of the car was properly prepared for motoring, and for the girl, her hat was low and broad, and before starting she took off her veil and made a scarf of it, which she tied over her head and under her chin. Thus Christopher's wish was gratified, and he saw that she was very pretty, even prettier than he had dared to picture her, after that tantalizing glimpse of big, dark eyes.

She was distinctly of the gypsy type, with a dusky color coming and going under the brown of her peach-smooth cheeks. Deep dimples sprang into life as she laughed; her great black eyes were exceedingly brilliant and full of expression, while every little gesture had an individual grace and eloquence which spoke of a singularly vivid personality. There was no doubt that she was a lady; and the first words that Christopher heard her speak told him that she was an American. In spite of the tiresome journey and the heat of the day, the girl was sparkling with the joy of youth and life, and was childishly delighted with the prospect of several hours' spin in a fine automobile. Possibly, too, Van Cortlandt's presence had something to do with her pleasure; in any case it was plain that she was an object of deep interest to the young man, who could scarcely take his eyes from her face.

The man on the front seat was apparently far from being as well satisfied with his situation as the others. He pulled his hat as far down as possible to keep the dust out of his eyes, turned up the collar of his overcoat, then nervously unbuttoned the great coat and threw it back, sighing with relief.

"What kind of a person was it who followed you, Jacobs?" the young man in the tonneau leaned forward to ask, after a long conversation with the girl who sat beside him.

Jacobs swallowed heavily, and Christopher saw his hand tighten on the back of the seat as he turned to answer: "Don't you think, sir, that I——that we—that it might be wiser not to—"

Van Cortlandt laughed. "Oh, I see, you think I'm incautious in talking business before outsiders? That's like your confidence, which my uncle described to me when he showed me your photograph the other day, and told me what sort of man I must expect to find. But, as a matter of fact, we can speak as among friends here—now that our errand has been done and we're close to home again. This young lady, Miss Warren, has been on the same mission that you and I have been on."

The man on the front seat gave a jump. "She, sir! And you, too, the same errand as mine!"

"Yes," said Van Cortlandt. "You probably guessed when you were introduced to me, over there, that you weren't the only one sent."

"I—no reason was given me to think that there were others," stammered Jacobs. "I supposed that mine was—was the only message."

"'Message' is rather a good word for a cautious man like you," laughed Van Cortlandt. "You're quite right; there's only one real 'message,' as you call it, but there are three of sorts, and each of us is carrying one. Even I don't know which is which. It is a strange thing that all three should have been brought together in this car, when only one should have come this way, another by Flushing, another by Rotterdam, as an additional precaution in case of 'followers.'"

"It is strange, indeed," said Jacobs, glancing stealthily at Christopher.

"Oh, Mr. Race isn't in this, except that he's taking us all to London as fast as he can get us there—three passengers instead of one he'd engaged to transport. As for Miss Warren, she's rather a celebrity, too. If you were an American instead of—what do you call yourself, Jacobs?—you would probably know something about Miss Constance Warren, who writes for the papers. When this day's work is over she will be privileged to make of it what she would call a 'story.' I got my uncle to employ her, so that she might get a little kudos out of the thing after it was well over, and the secret could be allowed to come out. But you haven't told me yet what sort of person followed you, and caused you to think it would be wiser to come this way instead of going by Flushing as arranged."

"It was a fat, Jewish-looking man, sir," replied Jacobs, becoming glib at last. "I could hardly describe him beyond that he had a hooked nose, a large black beard and was well dressed. He kept pressing against me in the railway station and looked at me with such particular interest that, when I got a chance to escape in a sudden press of the crowd—a lot of emigrants pouring into the station—I got away, and hastily decided to come by the Hook. I hope you think I did right."

"Oh, quite, if you felt sure that your imagination wasn't playing games with you. Miss Warren's experience was even more trying than yours. Because of a person who apparently chased her in a cab from the first and who climbed into her railway carriage at the last minute, she jumped out after the train began to move, risking trouble with Dutch officials, to say nothing of broken bones. She is a brave girl. But I knew that before hand." And Ean van Courtlandt gave Miss Warren a look which, if he had wished to hide his feelings for her, would have been, to say the least, imprudent.

"I was quite sure imagination had nothing to do with it," Jacobs insisted, anxious to exonerate himself. "Of course, the man may have been only an ordinary pickpocket. But do I look like a man whose pocket would be worth picking? This is the watch I carry about with me." And, somewhat ostentatiously, he pulled out a plain old gun metal watch.

Christopher heard this talk with interest, and confessed to himself that, though it wasn't "his affair," he would like to know the nature of the message to which the man beside him had so cautiously referred.

Before them now rose the spires and the clustered roofs of a village, and as they entered it Jacobs, who had been silent after putting away his watch, turned again to speak to Van Courtlandt.

"It would be a great favor," he said, "if you would be willing to make a short stop here, sir, only long enough for me to send a telegram. I don't know if your uncle mentioned to you that my wife is ill and worrying about this trip of mine?"

Van Cortlandt consented to the slight delay, and Christopher stopped the car in front of the village postoffice. Jacobs scrambled lightly down, like a younger man than he appeared to be, and Christopher happened to notice that his hands looked strong and muscular. As he hurried into the postoffice, Van Cortlandt strolled after him, buying a few stamps and standing near enough to take a glance at the address on the telegram. This was not because he distrusted Jacobs, but because he had much at stake in this venture and could not afford to take chances. The cipher message was unreadable, but the name of Jacobs stood out plainly at the top, and Van Courtlandt was satisfied, as he had expected to be.

At last they were off again, but they had not gone far when Jacobs cried out that his handkerchief had just blown away. It was one he valued; his wife had embroidered his initials on it. Really, he thought he saw it caught in a bush a little way behind. By Van Cortlandt's consent, Christopher reversed the car and went back for half a mile, but the handkerchief was not found, though Jacobs got out and ransacked a group of bushes to look for it, being gone some time. Returning, he rejoined the road ahead of Scarlet Runner, which stood throbbing impatient to be off, and Christopher thought, as he advanced toward the car, shaking his head and bemoaning his loss, that he scattered something by the way. Starting on again, with the nervous old man hardly settled in his place, there came a sharp explosion and Scarlet Runner had burst a tire.

The sudden sound gave Jacobs a shock, which caused him to grip the seat nervously and cry out. He had never been in a motor before, he exclaimed, and thought that someone must have shot at the car.

Some curious conjectures passed through the mind of Race as he did his work of repairing, with his three passengers sitting, or walking up and down, by the roadside. What he thought he kept to himself, as it would have been the height of impropriety to accuse, on the vaguest suspicion, the trusted employe of his own employer. Nevertheless, when the tire was changed and Scarlet Runner on the way once more, he threw an occasional keen glance at the whiskered face under the shadow of the dusty hat brim.

The day grew more and more sultry and the air was so heavy that even in driving there was no freshness. The thick dust also was very disagreeable, especially for the two new members of the party, who were unprepared for motoring, and Christopher was not surprised when, after two-thirds of the run to London, Jacobs complained of headache and vertigo. It was, he supposed, in an apologetic murmur, his inexperience in motoring, as well as having been somewhat upset at sea, which caused him to suffer now, but Christopher suggested that it was far more likely to be the weight of his big overcoat and advised him to take it off.

There were no pockets on the outside, but there might well be several capacious hidden ones. And though Jacobs seemed so certain that the contents of such pockets must be safe, when he had taken off the overcoat he not only sat upon, but leaned both shoulders against it, as it draped the back of the seat.

Still he felt no better, and on coming in sight of an old-fashioned roadside inn not far outside the dark fringe of London suburbs, he begged that the car might pause at the door long enough for him to get a glass of brandy.

"Hadn't you better wait a bit till we get farther on?" asked Van Cortlandt, not too sympathetically. "The stuff's sure to be bad here."

"Oh, sir, if you knew how faint and queer I feel—" faltered Jacobs, and Christopher hastily slowed down in front of the inn, where a small, uncovered automobile was already standing, covered with fresh dust.

The whiskered face was gray with dust, therefore it was impossible to see the natural state of the sufferer's complexion, but he sat with eyes half closed and head bowed forward, as if on the verge of unconsciousness, and Van Cortlandt jumped quickly out to order the brandy. Miss Warren sprang down from the car also, coming around to the front for an anxious look at the sick man's face, and to ask if she could do anything. She had her leather-cased music roll in her hand, and Christopher saw the dulled eyes of Jacobs glance at it from unded drooping lids.

Then, just as Van Cortlandt would have entered the inn, out burst three policemen. "We arrest you all on a warrant, charged with theft," called out one, "and it will be better for you not to resist."

But Van Cortlandt did resist, and violently. Not for himself alone, but for the girl. He hurled off the man who grasped him by the shoulder, and, springing to the aid of Miss Warren, dashed aside the big fellow in blue who would have seized her by the arm.

Instantly Jacobs had waked from his dazed state into vivid alertness. The third policeman, who attempted to catch Van Cortlandt around the waist, was sent reeling by a back-handed blow from a strong fist in deadly earnest; and, seeing this violence, seeing also the little crowd which quickly gathered at Van Cortlandt's cry of "Help," Jacobs slipped out of the car, lithe as a snake.

"Don't resist—safe not to resist, sir!" he cried; and, while apparently wishing to aid his patron, so stumbled against him as to fling him into the arms of the tallest policeman.

Seeing himself trapped, Van Cortlandt cried to Race, "Ninety-nine Park Lane!" and at the same instant something was tossed into the tonneau. Quick as light, Christopher took his cue and dashed off at speed, Jacobs and one of the policemen tearing after him.

"Ninety-nine Park Lane! Ninety-nine Park Lane!"

He seemed to hear Van Cortlandt's voice still calling the direction in his ears.

At first the number had no special meaning for him, but as his first hot excitement cooled he realized that 99 Park Lane had some association of importance in his mind.

"By Jove, it's Maritz's house!" he exclaimed. And the mystery of his tour and the experiences attending it appeared suddenly to flash with rainbow colors, clear and bright. For Maritz was (and is) a South African millionaire, president of the Blue Sinbad Diamond Mines, Limited. A rumor had been flitting about that he had bought from the company that great diamond lately found in their own fields, named the New Koh-i-Noor, and that, with the view of currying favor in high circles and perhaps securing a title, he intended to present it to the Crown.

What if Van Cortlandt had journeyed to Amsterdam on business concerning the New Koh-i-Noor? The cutting of the diamond must have been done there and if the young man were a nephew of Peter Maritz (Jacobs had alked about "your uncle"), what more natural that he should be trusted to bring it back safe, despite all attempts likely to be made upon it en route if the secret of the errand had leaked out?

With these thoughts running through his head, Christopher slowed down just enough to make it safe to turn his head and give a quick glance behind to see what thing had been thrown into the tonneau at the moment of his flight.

It was Miss Warren's music roll, and she must have contrived to toss it there on learning from Van Cortlandt's order that the car was to make a break for freedom. In his haste to aid his employer, or to mingle in the tussle in some way, Jacobs had jumped out, leaving his precious overcoat; therefore it was not strange that he had run screaming after Scarlet Runner.

"From the first I thought he was disguised and anxious to screen his face from the light," Christopher thought. "That cipher telegram he sent! He'd just learned from Van Cortlandt that there were three messengers instead of one, and all, by a queer chance, in this car. Could he have wired to bring those fellows out? What if they're not policemen?"

As the last word formed itself in his mind it was as though it had been a magic summons to call up other men in blue coats; for before Scarlet Runner had got her speed again three uniformed figures leaped from behind a clump of trees to line up across the road.

Christopher's first thought was to blame himself for slowing down to glance behind, And to atone by making a dash, scattering the men, who might be conspirators in the same plot. But, even at a distance, his clear-sighted eyes recognized a face he had seen before. One of these policemen was a well-known "motor trapper," with whom Christopher had come into friendly contact more than once. Whatever the men at the inn a mile back might be, these were genuine servants of the law; and a brilliant idea danced into Race's mind. With the view of making it useful, he slowed down instantly.

"You've done the measured distance at a speed of fifty and a half miles an hour," said the inspector of police, whom Christopher remembered, his stop-watch in his hand. "Where's your license?"

"Here it is, and here's my card," answered Race. "Don't you know me, inspector—in spite of the dust? And don't you know Scarlet Runner?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Race, I recognize you now," said the policeman. "I'm sorry to say, however, as you were going at such a speed—"

"First offense, isn't it?" laughed Christopher. "And when you've heard a word or two, I think even you will say I was justified in exceeding the legal limit. Summon me if you think right; but go back now to the next public-house and rescue my passengers, one of whom is, I believe, nephew of the millionaire, Peter Maritz."

The inspector waited to hear no more. All his professional pride was on fire. "Go on, Mr. Race," he broke in; "We'll overlook your furious driving this time. And have no fear for your friends."

Never had Christopher driven so fast through traffic, except on the day when he followed the automobile with the Nuremberg watch and at the last moment, as he drove through bronze gates into the millionaire's famous courtyard, he just escaped being crashed into by a passing motor omnibus.

The gates had been opened, perhaps, for an electric brougham which stood before the door to pass out, and the servants in livery glared daggers at the reckless chauffeur who dashed in, risking a collision. But Christopher stopped the Scarlet Runner at a safe distance and called out that he wished to see Mr. Maritz on urgent business.

At the sound of that name a gentleman looked from the window of the brougham, and his face had been made familiar by the same methods which immortalized his mansion.

"I come from Mr. Van Cortlandt," added Christopher, this time addressing himself directly to the millionaire. He expected to see a look of enlightenment dawn on the clever, somewhat hard, features. But, to his surprise, for an instant Peter Maritz appeared puzzled. "Mr. Van Cortlandt?" he repeated questioningly. Then, with a slight exclamation and a change of expression, he opened the door of the brougham before his alert servants had time to touch it.

"You have a message for me from Mr. Van Cortlandt?" he asked.

"Not exactly a message," answered Christopher. "But I have news of importance."

"Come indoors with me and tell it, then," said Peter Maritz, who had the manners of a gentleman as well as the wealth of a millionaire.

Christopher looked doubtful. "I'm not sure about leaving the car," he replied in a lower voice. "I may be carrying something of—er—considerable value."

Moritz asked no further questions and made no new suggestions, but mounted to the seat beside Christopher which Jacobs had last occupied, giving at the same time a glance at his servants which sent them to a distance.

Race did not begin his story at the beginning, but very near the end, slurring over what had happened until he reached the episode at the inn. When Maritz heard that Van Cortlandt and Miss Warren had been seized by men in the dress of policemen, his dark face suddenly paled.

"But my nephew told you to drive on, to come here?" he demanded tersely.

"Yes. And I came as fast I could, after sending back three genuine policemen to the rescue."

"Then where is that which my nephew trusted you to bring to me?"

"He trusted me with nothing—except the sense to understand his meaning. But Miss Warren tossed her music roll into the car as I shot away from the inn."

"That was clever of her, and showed that she is the right kind of girl. But, though she thought she was carrying something of importance, as a matter of fact she wasn't. She was a kind of decoy duck."

"The man Jacobs, who I venture to believe is a fraud, disguised to look like some one else, left his overcoat behind, very much against his will."

"No doubt it was against his will, if he had put a little parcel he ought to have had into one of its pockets. But there's nothing in that overcoat which can interest me. And for the moment I'm not interested in this spurious Jacobs, who was probably furious at being seen by Ean on the boat. What I want is the thing which my nephew, whom you know as Mr. Van Cortlandt, must have given you to bring me, or he would certainly not have sent you away from him with your car."

"I tell you he gave me nothing," persisted Christopher, beginning to resent the piercing glance of the millionaire. "If there is anything of his on board it must be in his luggage."

"Very well; we'll have the luggage down," said Maritz, "and I will look through it here and now, sitting by your side. Johnson!"—and he raised his tone imperatively—"shut the gates."

The bronze gates closed and the courtyard became as private as if it had been a vast room.

The next order was for Van Cortlandt's suitcase to come down from the roof of the car, where it had been placed when the new members joined the party. A strange-looking, thin little key on the millionaire's watchchain opened the case as though it had been made for the lock; and the absent man's clothing, neatly folded as if by a valet, lay exposed to view. Peter Maritz lifted everything out, shook each garment, and ransacked each corner of the handsomely fitted piece of luggage, but the thing he searched for was not there. He was looking very stern and anxious now.

"I am as sure as I am of my own life that my nephew would not have voluntarily remained in the hands of thieves, sending you and your motor on, if he had had on his person the thing I trusted him to bring back to me," said Maritz, with grim confidence. "He himself did not know whether he, Miss Warren, or my old servant Jacobs was carrying back the real thing or an imitation; nevertheless, as he knew the chances were one in three that he had the right one, he would have died rather than risk breaking faith with me."

"I can give you no explanation of the mystery," said Christopher.

"Now that you are here, in my courtyard, there is no reason why I shouldn't confirm your suspicions," said Maritz, in a more conciliatory tone. "You ought to have with you the New Koh-i-Noor, of which you must have heard. You see I have cause for anxiety and have had cause enough ever since the truth about my purchase of the finest diamond found in a hundred years unfortunately leaked out. I was certain that a well-known gang of diamond thieves would be on the lookout for the stone on its way back from Amsterdam, and I did my best to guard it. It was my nephew's idea to employ you and your car; and knowing your name and the reputation you made in Dalvania, I approved the notion. As for giving you a false name, he did nothing of the sort. His middle name is Van Cortlandt—his last is the same as mine; though he has lived much abroad, and, luckily for my project, is scarcely known here as yet. You can see why he did not wish to give his own name, Maritz, on account of the association. It was better for you to know nothing, and you need have no resentment if he was not entirely frank. The mission was not his own, but mine, though if he succeeded he was to be made my private secretary, with such a salary as to keep himself and a wife, if he chose to take one—Miss Warren, for instance—in luxury. Now you understand what hung upon success for him, and you must see that he would not easily fail me. If you are hiding anything because you thinq you haven't been treated fairly——"

Christopher broke in with a protest; but the position was now becoming worse than uncomfortable. He was at his wits' end, and in his desperation would have told the millionaire to send for the police and have him searched, if he chose, when a loud clang at the gate bell cut him short.

"Keep everybody out!" cried Maritz. "What if it is your nephew himself!" exclaimed Christopher.

"Then let him in," amended the master of the house; and an instant later the small gate at the side of the great ones was opened to admit Van Cortlandt-Maritz, with Miss Warren.

"Hurrah, uncle!" cried the young man. "We hired a motor and came on like lightning after the rescue. Poor old Jacobs was drugged on his way to get the diamond, it seems; and who but the notorious Tom Astley did the trick and disguised himself so well I think even you wouldn't have detected the fraud—so well he was exactly like Jacobs' photograph which you showed me—and got the parcel. But he's caught, and his three confederates; and the diamond's in his overcoat. This girl is the trump I told you she would be, and her packet she threw into the car, as Mr. Race must have told you."

"But yours—yours, Ean; that is what I want," almost panted the millionaire.

"I stuffed it into the petrol tank—just room to squeeze it in," said the young man, calmly. Then, turning to the girl, he caught her hand. "Won't you have a 'story' to write?" he cried. "And it will have to end with our wedding."

"Forgive me for everything, Mr. Race," said Peter Maritz. "You must come to that wedding."

(A new Adventure Next Week.)

GIANT IS PERFECT MAN

Missouri Backwoodsman Never Has Used Liquor or Tobacco.

CLINTON, Mo., Nov. 18.—Dusty and travel-worn, but with his long strides retaining the vigor of all his 18 years of backwoods life, Clarence Barton trudged into town, after covering 130 miles from Turner, Mo. He came in the heat and dust over the miles of hills afoot to attend the Missouri conferences of the Seventh Day Adventists. And this youth has lived a strange life in the very modern and up-to-date state of Missouri.

In all his 18 years he never tasted a mouthful of meat. Never has a drink of tea or coffee passed his lips. His meager fare of daily food has never been seasoned with pepper. He never has tasted a drop of alcohol in any form and does not know the twang of tobacco smoke. And he is a perfect specimen—a young backwoods giant. Barton excelled in all the sports of the camp.

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BEST FOR SKIN

Because it cleanses, purifies and beautifies, while the Ointment soothes and heals pimples, blackheads, etc. Do not confound these fragrant, delicate emollients with coarsely medicated soaps and ointments.

Sample Each Free with 32-p. Skin Book by return mail. Address post-card: "Cuticura, Dept. 4F, Boston." Sold everywhere.

Quick, Safe Way to Remove Hairs

(Toilet Talks.)

Keep a little delatone powder on your dressing table, and when ugly, hairy growths appear make a paste with a little of the powder and some water; apply and let remain on the hairy surface for two or three minutes, then rub off, wash the skin and the hairs have vanished. This treatment is quite harmless, and rarely more than one application is required, but to avoid disappointment care should be used to buy the real delatone.—Adv.