

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
MR. EARLE WILLIAMS as CHRISTOPHER RACE
MISS MARGUERITE BLAKE as LADY IVY DE LISLE

Next Week Another Story and New Picture
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CHAPTER I: JANUARY.

The Car and His Majesty.

It was such an unusually beautiful and striking car that everyone looked at it, then turned to look again. This was what Christopher Race had counted upon.

"Good old Scarlet Runner!" he said as he drove. "Good old girl, you're making your impression."

Slowly the red car moved up Regent street as far as Oxford Circus, where it turned to roll back, like some great, splendid beast pacing the length of a vast cage.

It was past 7 o'clock, but the sky was a blue and silver mosaic of stars and electric globes pulsed with white lights that struck and glinted on the rich scarlet panels of the automobile.

The army of workers pouring from shops and factories, the army of pleasure-seekers pouring into restaurants and theaters, all looked at the car, straining their eyes to make out the crest—gold and dark blue painted on scarlet, and the name of the crowd who were women looked also at Christopher Race.

He drove alone, but he was dressed like a gentleman, not in the glorified livery of a chauffeur. He was a thin, dark, easily frightened man, with an air of breeding not contradicted by his evident self-consciousness. His mouth—clean-shaven—gave him strength of character, and his eyes a sense of humor and high daring.

The electric globe lit his face with the fierce intensity of theater footlights, revealing in it not one mean line. But it was not only the good looks of the driver that attracted attention. It was his extraordinary behavior.

He sharply scanned each passerby as if searching the crowd for some lost friend; and whenever he caught the eye of a well-dressed man, he might, from his appearance, have a good bank account and a correspondingly good position in society, up went the gloved hand of the motor-driver in evident invitation. At the same time he smiled and slightly lifted his eyebrows so that his whole face seemed to ask a question.

No one responded to his agreeable signals and he arrived at the corner of Charles street without stopping once.

In this quiet thoroughfare of respectable private hotels and better-class lodging houses was drawn up an automobile, handsome enough to rival the red car. It was a dark gray in color, and it stood silent and sad before a discreet-looking doorway—silent because, apparently, there was some malign reason for its silence.

As he slowed down to pass the green car, the discreet door opened and a gentleman came out on the pavement.

He was dressed as an English gentleman should be when he is going to dinner on a winter evening in London; but, though he might give the impression of a gentleman, he did not look like an English gentleman.

Under the sleek silk hat, and above the thick, white silk handkerchief that filled in the "V" of the black overcoat, was a face which an observant person could hardly have passed without a second glance.

Never before had the young man in the red car beheld that face in the flesh, save once, when as a little boy he had been taken to a grand pageant to gaze in awe at those same clean-cut features (or others exactly like them), under a glittering silver helmet. But, unless he were extremely mistaken, he had seen the face in a hundred photographs, in as many black-and-white drawings in illustrated journals he had seen it caricatured in comic sketches and sketched on to white sheets by biographers at music halls.

For a moment Christopher Race forgot all about his car, and his interest in the car that was dimmed. But the first words spoken by the gentleman with the shining hat, and an overcoat reminded him forcibly of all three.

"No better success?" asked a clear voice, in perfect English, enquired by a slight foreign accent.

"I am very sorry indeed, sir," apologized the chauffeur, but I haven't been able yet to make out what's the matter. Something wrong with the carburetor or the ignition."

"I'm late already," broke in the gentleman, visibly bolstering up his patience.

It was this moment that the driver of the red car chose for making his habitual gesture, which he accompanied with the usual inviting smile and questioning lift of the eyebrows.

Instantly the keen gaze of the man with the waxed moustache fixed his eyes on the "V" of the black overcoat. "Why do you hold up your hand?" inquired the clear tones, with the English accent. At the same time the speaker tried to mask his face in shadow, backing away from the blaze of the two cars' acetylene lamps.

"I hold up my hand because I'm plying for hire," answer Christopher Race.

"Oh! Plying for hire with that car? You are joking, I suppose. Tone and expression expressed astonishment, perhaps distrust. But the red automobile had come to a dead stop, and the gentleman in the tall hat had stepped to the edge of the pavement to examine it at close quarters, also to examine incidentally, the driver.

"Not at all," said Christopher Race, "unless life is a joke. I'm out to gain a livelihood. I have no license to drive, but I have a license to beg, if you would care to see it."

"Hat," said the other, "you are a remarkable pair, plying for hire—you and your car. May I ask if you are in the employment of some person who sends you out on this business?"

"I'm my own employer—under Fate. I drive my car; Fate drives me."

"Indeed? I'm inclined to think," and the keen eyes flashed to the thinking chauffeur—"that Fate intends you to drive me. What do you think about it?"

"I should be delighted to think that you are right," returned Christopher Race.

"Very well," said the other: "I will engage you for the evening. You can take me where I wish to go, and wait. If my chauffeur can bring my car round later, you can bring me in

any case you shall have the same money. What are your charges?"

"For the entire evening, five guineas," said Christopher.

"Good; that is settled." The gentleman stepped forward, and the owner of the red car and the chauffeur of the green one both sprang to open the door for him. But he waved them back.

"I shall sit with the driver," he announced, with the air of one accustomed to quick decisions, and never to have them gainsaid.

"Do you know Desmond House?" he asked, when he was in his place, and Christopher ready to start.

The driver was not surprised in the circumstances to hear the name of a historic place, owned by a man whose ancestors had helped to make not only his history, but the history of nations. He replied quietly that he did not know Desmond house.

"Then drive me there, if you please, and as quickly as you can," said his employer. "Meantime I shall be pleased to have you solve the mystery of yourself and your fine car."

Christopher obliged.

"If I had failed to earn at least the sum of five guineas before 12 tonight,

nothing could prevent me from losing another sum, amounting approximately to 175,000 pounds."

He invited Christopher to go on with the story, and Christopher did, in a way perfectly frank, simple, and a little humorous.

"The 175,000 pounds—or thereabouts—are my uncle's," said he. "Also a rather nice house in the country, and a few other things which I was brought up to believe were my own. It was my uncle's idea to allow me from eight to ten pounds a year, just enough to keep me fed, clothed and housed in decency, which, in his opinion—and in mine, when I came to think of it—was more than I deserved."

"I heard him through to the end," and then proposed a substitute plan. I admitted the young scoundrel, but denied the incorrigible. I said I thought he might give me a chance to make a fortune for myself. As proof of this existence I refused the allowance, asking my uncle to keep his money and reserve his judgment. Said I: "If within a year I'm a reformer, I'll give you the money. If I'm not, I'm not to touch it. I'm not to touch it, I'm not to touch it, I'm not to touch it."

"All right," said he, "it's a bargain. But I don't believe you can do it."

"And this," said Christopher, "is how I'm doing it. You see, my first passenger, barely in time, was a man that I'm able not only to make my own way in the world, but to make it like a gentleman—will you reconsider, and not leave the family house and the money away from the last representative of your name?"

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"You are at my disposal for the evening," he believed, said Christopher, as he entered the drive and slowed down for his approach to the door. "My car may come or it may not. In any case, I wish you to wait."

Ten minutes passed, may be, and the thoughts of Christopher Race had glided from the affairs of his late passenger to his own. He was wondering when he might expect to get his dinner, when the one thing which he had expected did not happen.

Close to the Scarlet Runner appeared the figure which a few minutes ago had been ceremoniously ushered into the house. There it was—the slightly soldierly form, seeming taller than it was because of its upright bearing. There was the shining hat, shading the clear features; there the folded white handkerchief and the napier overcoat.

Surprised but hiding surprise at sight of the guest of the evening, unaccompanied and out of doors when he ought still to have been engaged with his orders, Christopher sprang from his seat and awaited orders.

"Saunders' hotel, Charles street, Pall Mall—quick!" said the crisp voice with the foreign accent. But it was less crisp than before, and betrayed agitation.

Had his passenger's last question been repeated, Christopher Race could not have answered it truthfully and at the same time decorously, for he was consumed with curiosity.

One had always heard that this celebrated personage was erratic and addicted to making decisions on impulse; but his latest caprice bade fair, it seemed, to break the record. A royal gentleman is asked to a friendly dinner; he accepts, goes; and before he has had five minutes at his host's table out he pops, unattended, nervous in manner, and demands to be taken, promptly back where he came.

However, Christopher drove on, in a reflective mood and at a pace to suit it, until he had reached Charles street. There, at the door which had given him his fare and his adventure, he stopped.

"Go in and inquire if Lord Thane and Lady Ivy de Lisle have come," the foreign voice directed brusquely.

Christopher's face made no comment on these instructions, but that was because he had the habits of a man of the world. Within he was excited and curious, for the earl of Thane and his daughter were distant cousins of Christopher Race, and naturally he would have liked to know the why and wherefore of his majesty's interest in their movements. If the name of Lord Thane alone had

been mentioned it would not have struck him so oddly, for Lord Thane had been once connected with the diplomatic service, and had spent years on the continent. But why did one of the first gentlemen of Europe leave a dinner party in the midst of the approaches of last season. But, then, a man highly placed in occasionally unselfish enough to interest himself in a girl for the sake of another man who needs an advocate. And there were two men whose names Christopher had heard coupled with Lady Ivy de Lisle's.

Either might have persuaded this sovereign to plead his cause with the girl's father, for both could claim the country as the land of their birth. One was Baron von Hess, the enormously rich inventor of the latest quick-firing gun adopted by the Triple Alliance; the other was young Max Lind—whom Christopher had known slightly and admired greatly at Oxford—the son of a notorious socialist who had adopted England for a country when banished from his own. A year or two ago there had been an rapprochement between Max Lind, and an outraged monarch, and a place in the diplomatic service for young Max had been held out as an olive branch.

Baron von Hess was a good match for any girl below royalty; Max Lind, on the contrary, would have difficulty

to read the letter. He wishes to know if he may have the honor of coming out to—"

"No," said his majesty, imperatively. Then with less abruptness: "Go back, give Lord Thane my compliments, and say that I regret not having the time to speak with him this evening, as I have an important engagement, for which I am already in danger of being late. My compliments also to Lady Ivy de Lisle, and I am obliged for their courtesy in returning the letter unread. They shall hear from me. That is all; and remember that I am in haste."

The message evidently gave disappointment both to father and daughter, though, Christopher guessed that it was for different reasons.

He did not doubt that the "important engagement" for which his fare had declared himself "in danger of being late" was a continuation of the unfortunate dinner-party at Desmond house; therefore the order which came from the tonneau gave him a double surprise.

"The Wood, No Thoroughfare street, Hamersmith." The words struck sharply on Christopher's ears. His majesty was not going back to the dinner-party. He was going to the house of Max Lind, the elder—Max Lind, the long-ago banished socialist.

What did it mean. Chris asked himself—that the autocratic head of that government was going to pay a secret visit to the Wood tonight.

There was no drive leading up to the house, and Christopher must wait at the curbstone in the deserted

other could move or speak. "It's I—Christopher Race. Don't you remember me? There is no time to apologize and explain, except to say that I drove him to the house, and—I've heard some things. I thought you were away with your father. I followed to protect his majesty in case of a plot. I've stayed to defend you from one."

"There is no plot," said Max Lind, "I'm not so glib. I've seen Ivy tonight, and I want you to wait. She loves you. This will break her heart, poor child."

"Don't!" stammered Max.

"I wouldn't if there were no hope, but believe me, there is. I want you to wait. I want you to wait."

"One such promise as I've made tonight is enough," Max cut in, his voice like ice. "You don't know—"

"I don't know what it is you tried to do, and failed in, if you did fail. I suppose you were sent of some mission—perhaps one of those which no government will acknowledge if it fails, and—"

"You are right there. I stupid fool, though I had been a brilliant success, and expected a personal letter of congratulation. Ivy, too, and her father—but I cannot talk of it. It seems that I played into the hands of the enemy all the while I dreamed they were playing into mine. I don't even now understand, but—one takes the word of royalty. You overheard something, but I know you won't betray it. You meant well—though it's no use. You must forget this scene—wipe it off the slate. Tomorrow, if you see me before, with the rest of the world, when—"

"Yes, if. But it's only if," Lind, I ask you to wait till I come back, with news which may make all the difference to the world."

The white face flushed painfully and the tragic eyes dilated. "If you mean to fetch Ivy—"

They grasped hands, and Christopher went quickly out by the way he had entered.

There, by the car, stood the neat figure in the dark overcoat, the keen eyes looking this way and that, under a penthouse frown.

"Beg a thousand pardons for keeping you, sir," said Christopher, as he shot out between the half-open gates, "but something's gone wrong with the motor, and I went inside to look for you, just to say that I must get to the motor before the garage before I can take you on. I won't be long; not many minutes are needed for repairs."

He bent and fumbled, and with a few turns of a spanner loosened the joint of the exhaust-pipe near the silencer. Then quickly he turned the starting handle, and Scarlet Runner broke into a series of sharp explosions, dry as the barking of giant fire-crackers.

His majesty stepped back with less dignity than haste, and uttered some exclamation in his native tongue, which was lost among the explosions.

"I'll wait for you," he said, and he went about the silence before Christopher Race could have shouted as he flashed away, the car yelping maledictions.

When he had turned two corners and was well out of earshot from No Thoroughfare street, he stopped, and screwed up the loosened joint, then darted on again; but not to a garage.

It was well for him and well for Scarlet Runner that traffic had gone to sleep, and policemen had something more than the thought of than springing traps upon reckless motorists, for Christopher drove as if for the winning of a cup; and in eight minutes he was at the door of Desmond house.

To the extreme surprise of the chauffeur in green and brown, the gentleman chauffeur sounded the big bronze knocker with the self-confidence of a prince.

The door flew open, and a footman stood revealed, staring.

Christopher wrote something on a visiting card.

"This must be given instantly to the gentleman whose name I have written across the card," he said, pointing at an under-wooded line.

"It's as much as my place is worth—more, sir," stammered the footman, his respect increasing as the visitor's peremptoriness increased. "I don't see how I could manage it."

"I do not care how you manage it, provided you do manage it; but it will have to be managed," said Christopher. "Give me the card again."

The man gave it grudgingly.

Christopher took from his pocket a five-pound note (his last, by the way, but that was a detail) and wrapped it round the card.

"I will wait here," said he, "and I expect an answer in ten minutes at the latest."

He got it in six; but it was neither verbal nor in writing. The man to whom he had sent the urgent message appeared himself at the door.

"You are very good," Christopher exclaimed. "But I knew you would come."

"Of course I came. I was not made of stone," said the other. "And you were that I was a matter of life or death for a man I value."

"Do you value young Max Lind, sir?" asked Christopher.

"I do, indeed, and intend to show my appreciation. He has just rendered me a great service, in accomplishing a mission tactfully, adroitly, as few other young men could have accomplished it. And I have done my best not only to assure his career but his happiness for the future as a reward. Why do you ask such a question?"

"Because at this moment Max Lind believes you have doomed him to death, as a ghastly failure who has compromised the government for which he was working. He believes that you have put into his hand a revolver and told him the only thing to do is to blow out his brains."

"Great heavens! But this is madness. It will be suicide in less than an hour, unless you will consent to come with me, sir."

"I leave my friends who are entertaining me to go—where?"

"To the Wood, Hamersmith, the house of the Lind, where a man who usurps your dignity and uses it for his own—or some other—advantage is expecting me back every moment."

"You mean—Can you mean Gustav Krokustus?"

"If Gustav Krokustus is the living image of you, sir, has cultivated a voice like yours, and wears clothes copied from yours."

"He does, and for the best of reasons—because he is what you English would call my understudy. A man who naturally resembles me remarkably, and is paid to cultivate every detail of that resemblance, taking my place during my visit here whenever I wish it before the public, that I may enjoy myself as I please and not be spied upon by reporters—or anarchists. But he is off duty tonight."



"YOU WILL DO IT!" "YES I WILL DO IT, BUT—"

in making his cause good with Lady Ivy's father, unless, indeed, a monarch should turn matchmaker.

As Christopher started to obey orders he hoped that this mysterious visit had to do with Max Lind and Ivy de Lisle. If it had he was glad he was concerned with it, for Max Lind—unknown to Christopher—was a clever and handsome self-made man, the hero of Christopher's two best years at Oxford.

His hand was on the door, when a call from his employer gave him pause. "Stop!" said the great man. "I left a letter here for—let me see—was it for Lord Thane or his daughter?—one of the two; I really forget to which I addressed it. That letter I want back. I have changed my mind and prefer to write a different one. If Lord Thane has not arrived, or if he has, arrived, but has not yet read the letter, I wish to have it again. Should you learn, on the other hand, that the letter has already been received, I will send in a message."

Christopher went in somewhat bewildered, but knowing that somehow he must succeed in accomplishing his errand.

Christopher was only a poor relation, a mere "forty-second cousin," and moreover, was under the ban of family disapproval. Nevertheless, Lady Ivy gave him a lovely smile of surprised recognition.

She was always more than pretty, and a radiant beauty when she smiled—smiled with gray eyes and pink cheeks and a pair of dimples that gave new life and meaning to red lips.

"Why, father, it's Christopher!" she said. Naughtily Cousin Kit! Have you come here to see us?"

"I came to see if you were here," he replied, but in hand for her and for Lord Thane, who had only the ghost of a smile, with no emphasizing dimples. "Was sent, he added, "by a gentleman who not long ago left a letter to await your arrival."

"Oh, no! we must see what's in it!" broke in the girl. "I can't wait. Kit, you know Max Lind at Oxford?"

"Ivy," warned Lord Thane.

"Why shouldn't I tell, as Kit's in his majesty's confidence?" asked the girl, wilfully. "We hope—we think—Max is to be thanked and honored for a service—oh, well, I'm not going to say a secret and do a service, but most important. And if he has succeeded, father's promised that Max and I—"

"I will take it to his majesty myself," suggested Lord Thane, and went to the door; but in an instant he had returned.

"You can take him the letter, tell him that my daughter and I have just arrived, that he can guess the errand which has brought us up from the country to town at this time; that I am completely at his service should he wish to speak with me instead of writing; and we will remain here in the hall awaiting his message."

Sympathetic now as well as puzzled, Christopher took the letter and carried it out to his passenger, who all but snatched it in his eagerness. "Good!" exclaimed his majesty. "Now let us get away."

"But, sir," said Christopher, "Lord Thane has come and—"

The gentleman in the tonneau hastily examined the envelope. "It is still unopened," he muttered.

"Lord Thane has not yet had time

street appropriately named "No Thoroughfare." Christopher got down to open the gates, half expecting to find them locked, but they swung apart with a rusty creak, and his majesty was instantly swallowed up in shadow.

The Lind, father and son, were above suspicion of treachery; but Max, senior, was, or had been, notorious for his anti-royalist ideas, and some firebrand friend might have taken base advantage of his absence.

What if the man had gone into a trap and should never come out alive? Ten minutes at least had passed since his majesty was devoured by the shadows. If he had knocked and found no one within, there had been more than time for him to return to the automobile. Some one, then, must have received him, but whether in loyalty or treachery Christopher could not hope to discover by blundering to the front door and ringing the bell.

Treading on grass to avoid gravel, he skirted the path round the house to the right, and was somewhat relieved to see a sprinkling of light on the frosted lawn. It was thrown from a long French window which opened to the ground, and as the curtains half drawn back, Christopher could see into the room beyond.

His majesty stood with his back half turned to the window, and facing him was young Max Lind, in traveling dress, his white face carved in stone, eyes dark with tragedy. The visitor held out to his host a small revolver, and Max was taking it.

"It is the best thing you can do," his majesty said, and through the open window the words reached ears for which they were not meant. "The only thing left for you to do is honor."

"Very well," Max answered dutifully. And he looked at the weapon. But Christopher thrilled as he felt it was not the revolver which those tragic eyes really saw. He saw Ivy. Ivy's cousin said to himself.

"You will do it?"

"I will do it. But—"

"There is a 'but'?"

"My God! Yes, sir, there is a 'but'—more than one. There is my father. He was so happy and proud. He believed that I should succeed—that I should be able to satisfy you. And there is—you know well, sir, there is another."

It is better for both of them that you should take this way of wiping out disgrace."

"Disgrace! It's a hard word. I tried so earnestly. I thought—I was so certain, only a quarter of an hour ago, that I had done well—as well as a man could do."

"And now that I tell you you were utterly fooled, outwitted by men you should never have trusted, don't you see where you stand?"

"Good night, sir. You will learn tomorrow that this time it wasn't in vain."

His majesty took a step towards a door opposite the window, but Max reached it before him and opened it.

"I prefer to find my way out alone," said the visitor. His host bowed submissively, and stood at the door until the erect figure in the dark overcoat had passed out of sight.

Then, softly, he closed the door, and as he came back to a desk which was placed between door and window Christopher Race threw the casements wide open.

"Lind," he exclaimed, before the

"Officially, perhaps. Yet he has been at work. He went to the Charles street hotel, got back a letter left by you for Lord Thane, who is my cousin, and drove out to the Wood—"

"How do you know all this?"

"Because I took him for you, and acted as his chauffeur until I began to suspect. Then I came here to get you to save my friend, Max Lind, from misery and disgrace—my cousin, Ivy de Lisle, from a broken heart."

"That lovely girl! Ah, I guess the mystery. He is paid for this business by von Hess, who loves Lady Ivy and hates Lind. But von Hess shall pay more. He shall pay me. As for Krokustus—did you say we should find him still at the Wood?"

"I said that I left him there—watching, but when he sees you—"

"We will be too quick for him, said his majesty, looking pleased.

And they were too quick; for he is a man whose prophecies usually come true.

He made several people happy that night; but Gustav Krokustus was not one of them, nor Baron von Hess.

Christopher poured a glass of champagne over Scarlet Runner's bonnet.

"That's a libation, my beauty," said he.

He was glad that he had quarrelled with his uncle, that he was free, with a year of adventure before him.

(A New Adventure Next Week.)

CLEARING HOUSE FOR FARM IDEAS

Omaha Will Be Host to 3,500 Rural Citizens Within Seven Weeks.

THE CONVENTION CITY

About 3,500 farmers from Nebraska and many other states will exchange ideas in Omaha during the seven weeks between the last week in November and the second week of next January.

Five years ago not a single one of these farmers' organizations was holding its convention in Omaha. Now many of them are coming here annually, as the best central point at which all the farmers may meet most conveniently.

The Farmers' Equity union, a national organization, has even gone so far as to break a precedent in that it is to hold its meeting in Omaha for the second consecutive time. Never before has this national body held its convention twice successively in the same place. Last year, however, it was brought to Omaha, and the delegates just naturally liked the place. So they broke the rule and voted to come back here in 1916.

Bureau Did It.

It is largely through the persistent work of the Bureau of Publicity in Omaha that these farmers' conventions are meeting in Omaha. This bureau for five years has been giving special attention to bringing conventions to Omaha, making Omaha the convention city, and special attention has been given in this work to farmers' organizations, since Omaha is favorably situated in the heart of a great agricultural belt, and it seemed proper that the farmers' conventions should center here.

Six big conventions, either of farmers directly, or of trades immediately concerned with agricultural

activities, are booked for Omaha during the seven weeks above mentioned. November 21 to 23, the Farmers' Co-operative State Grain and Live Stock Shipping association is to hold its convention here. This will bring 800 delegates. This is an organization that deals exclusively with the problems of marketing.

December 20 and 21 the National Farmers' Equity union is to be in session here. This is a co-operative buying and selling organization. This is to bring delegates from Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

Early in January the Farmers' Union, of some 2,000 delegates, is to be here. This is a state organization, dealing in co-operative buying and selling for the farmer.

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-621

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