

The Two Vanrevels

By BOOTH TARKINGTON.

Author of "The Gentleman From Indiana" and "Monsieur Beaucaire"

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(CONTINUED.)

These two young men were members of a cheerful band who feasted, laughed, wrangled over politics, danced, made love and sang terrible chords on summer evenings together, as young men will. Will Cummings, editor of the Rouen Journal, was one of these, a tall, sallow man, very thin, very awkward and very gentle. Mr. Cummings proved himself always ready with a loud and friendly laugh for the poorest joke in the world, his countenance shining with such kindness that no one ever had the heart to reproach him with the evils of his journalistic performances or for the things he broke when he danced. Another was Tappingham Marsh, an exceedingly handsome person, somewhat languid in appearance, dainty in manner with women, offhand with men, almost as reckless as Cralley and often the latter's companion and assistant in dissipation. Young Francis Chenoweth never failed to follow both into whatever they planned. He was short and pink, and the uptilt of his nose was coherent with the appealing earnestness which was habitual with him. Eugene Madrilion was the sixth of these intimates, a dark man, whose Latin eyes and color advertised his French ancestry as plainly as his emotionless mouth and lack of gesture betrayed the mingling of another strain.

All these and others of the town were wont to "talk politics" a great deal at the little club on Main street, and all were apt to fall foul of Tom Vanrevel or Cralley Gray before the end of any discussion. For those were the days when they twisted the lion's tail in vehemence and bitter earnest, when the eagle screamed in mixed figures, when few men knew how to talk and many orated, when party strife was savagely personal, when tolerance was called the "pure fire of patriotism," when criticism of the existing order of things surely incurred fiery anathema and black invective, and brave was he, indeed, who dared to hint that his country as a whole and politically did lack some two or three particular virtues and that the first step toward obtaining them would be to help it to realize their absence.

This latter point of view was that of the firm of Gray & Vanrevel, which did most of the talking, quite beauti-



Sang terrible chords on summer evenings, fully, too, and both had to stand against odds in many a sour argument, for they were not only abolitionists, but opposed the attitude of their country in its difficulty with Mexico, and, in common with other men of the time who took their stand, they had to grow accustomed to being called disloyal traitors, foreign toadies, malignants and traducers of the flag. Tom had long been used to epithets of this sort, suffering their sting in quiet, and was glad when he could keep Cralley out of worse employment than standing firm for an unpopular belief.

There was one place to which Vanrevel, seeking his friend and partner when the latter did not come home at night, could not go. This was the tower chamber, and it was in that mysterious apartment of the Carewe cupola that Cralley was apt to be deeply occupied when he remained away until daylight. Strange as it appears, Mr. Gray maintained peculiar relations of intimacy with Robert Carewe in spite of the feud between Carewe and his own best friend. This intimacy, which did not necessarily imply any mutual fondness, though Cralley seemed to dislike nobody, was betokened by a

furtive understanding of a sort between them. They held brief, earnest conversations on the street or in corners when they met at other people's houses, always speaking in voices too low to be overheard, and they exercised a mysterious symbolism, somewhat in the manner of fellow members of a secret society. They had been observed to communicate across crowded rooms by lifted eyebrow, nod of head or a surreptitious turn of the wrist, so that those who observed them knew that a question had been asked and answered.

It was noticed also that there were five other initiates to this masonry—Eugene Madrilion, the elder Chenoweth, General Trumble, Tappingham Marsh and Jefferson Bareaud. Thus on the afternoon following Miss Betty's introduction to Rouen's favorite sons and daughters Mr. Carewe, driving down Main street, held up one forefinger to Madrilion as he saw the young man turning in at the club. Eugene nodded gravely and as he went in, discovering Marsh, the general and others listening to Mr. Gray's explanation of his return from the river with no fish, stealthily held up one finger in his turn. Trumble replied with a wink, Tappingham nodded, but Cralley slightly shook his head. Marsh and the general started with surprise and stared incredulously. That Cralley should shake his head! If the signal had been for a church meeting they might have understood.

Mr. Gray's conduct was surprising to two other people at about the same time—Tom Vanrevel and Fanchon Bareaud; the former by his sudden devotion to the law; the latter by his sudden devotion to herself. In a breath he became almost a domestic character.

Miss Bareaud was even happier than she was astonished—and she was mightily astonished—to find her betrothed developing a taste for her society alone. Formerly she had counted upon the gayeties of her home to keep Cralley near her; now, however, he told her tenderly he wished to have her all to himself. This was not like him, but Fanchon did not question.

The Bareaud house was the most hospitable in Rouen. Mrs. Bareaud, a southerner, loving to persuade the visitor that her home was his, not hers, lived only for her art, which was that of the table. Mr. Bareaud at fifty had lived so well that he gave up walking, which did not trouble him, but at sixty he gave up dancing, which did trouble him. His only hope, he declared, was in Cralley Gray's promise to invent for him a concave partner.

There was a thin, quizzing shank of a son, Jefferson, who lived upon quinine, ague and deviltry, and there were the two daughters, Fanchon and Virginia. The latter was three years older than Fanchon, as dark as Fanchon was fair, though not nearly so pretty, a small, good natured, romping spry of a girl who had handed down the heart and hand of Cralley Gray to her sister with the best grace in the world. For she had been the heroine of one of Mr. Gray's half dozen or so most serious affairs, and after a furious rivalry with Mr. Carewe the victory was generally conceded to Cralley. His triumph had been of about a fortnight's duration when Fanchon returned from St. Mary's, and with the advent of the younger sister the elder, who had decided that Cralley was the incomparable she had dreamed of since infancy, was generously allowed to discover that he was not that vision; that she had fallen in love with her own idea of him, whereas Fanchon cared only that he be Cralley Gray.

To be in love with Cralley became Fanchon's vocation. She spent all her time at it and produced a blurred effect upon strangers. Nor was she alone in suspecting Mr. Gray of genius. In the first place, he was so odd; in the second, his poems were "already attracting more than local attention," as the Journal remarked generously, for Cralley had ceased to present his rhymes to that valuable paper. Aye, Boston no less was his mart.

He was rather radical in his literary preferences and hurt the elder Chenoweth's feelings by laughing heartily at some poems of the late Lord Byron, offended many people by disliking the style of Sir Edward Bulwer and even refused to admit that James Fenimore Cooper was the greatest novelist that ever lived. But these things were as nothing compared with his unpatriotic defense of Charles Dickens. Many Americans had fallen into a great rage over the vivacious assault upon the United States in "Martin Chuzzlewit."

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Nevertheless Cralley still boddily agreed, the most dexterous writer of his day and the most notable humorist of any day. Of course the Englishman had not visited and thoroughly studied such a city as Rouen, Cralley confessed twinklingly; but, after all, wasn't there some truth in "Martin Chuzzlewit?" Mr. Dickens might have been far from a clear understanding of our people, but didn't it argue a pretty ticklish vanity in ourselves that we were so fiercely resentful of satire, and was not this very heat over "Martin Chuzzlewit" a confirmation of one of the points the book had presented against us? General Trumble replied to this suggestion with a personal one to the effect that a man capable of saying a good word for so monstrous a slander—that a man, sir, capable of declaring his native country to be vain or sensitive, ought to be horsewhipped, and at this Cralley laughed consummately.

Trumble retorted with the names of Benedict Arnold and Aaron Burr. "And if it comes to a war with these greasers," he spluttered apologetically, "and it is coming, mighty soon, we'll find Mr. Gray down in Mexico throwing mud on the stars and stripes and cheering for that one legged horse thief, Santa Anna! Anything to seek out something foolish among your own people!"

"Don't have to seek far sometimes, general," murmured Cralley from the depths of the best chair in the club, whereupon Trumble, not trusting himself to answer, went out to the street.

CHAPTER V.

MISS CAREWE was at her desk, writing to Sister Cecilia, whom she most loved of all the world, when the bells startled her with their sudden clangor. The quill dropped from her hand, she started to her feet, wide eyed, not understanding, while the whole town, drowsing peacefully a moment ago, resounded immediately with a loud confusion. She ran to the front door and looked out, her heart beating wildly.

The western sky was touched with a soft rose color, which quickly became a warm glow, fluctuating, and in the instant shot up like the coming of a full aurora. Then through the broken foliage of the treetops could be seen the orange curls of flame, three-quarters of a mile away though they were.

People calling loudly that "it was Carewe's warehouses" were running down the street. From the stable old Nelson on her father's best horse came galloping and, seeing the white figure in the doorway, cried out in a quavering voice without checking his steed:

"I goin' to tell yo' pa, Miss Betty. He in de kentry on lan' bus'nness. Go back in de house, missy!"

The other servants, like ragged sketches in the night, flitted by with excited ejaculations to join the runners, and Miss Betty followed them across the dew strewn turf in her light slippers, but at the gate she stopped.

From up the street came the sound of a bell smaller than those of the churches and courthouse, yet one that outdid all others in the madness of its appeal to clear the way. It was borne along by what seemed at first an indefinite black mass, but which—as the

aurora grew keener, producing even here a faint yellow twilight—resolved itself into a mob of hoarsely shouting men and boys, who were running and tugging at ropes which drew along three extraordinary vehicles. The came rapidly down the street and passed Miss Betty with a hubbub and din beyond all understanding—one line of men, most of them in red shirts and oilcloth helmets, at a dead run with the hose cart, a second with the hand engine, the third dragging the ladder wagon. One man was riding, a tall, straight gentleman in evening clothes and without a hat, who stood precariously in the hose cart calling in an annoyed tone through a brazen trumpet. Miss Betty recognized him at once. It was he who caught her kitten, and she thought that if she had been Fanchon Bareaud she must have screamed a warning, for his balance appeared a thing of mere luck, and if he fell he would be trampled under foot and probably run over by the engine. But happily, she remembered, she was not Fanchon Bareaud.

Before, behind and beside the department raced a throng of boys, wild with the joy experienced by their species when property is being handsomely destroyed. After them came panting women, holding their sides and gasping with the effort to keep up with the flying procession.

Miss Betty trembled, for she had never seen the like in her life. She stood close to the hedge and let them go by. Then she turned in after them and ran like a fleet young deer. She was going to the fire.

Over all the uproar could be heard the angry voice through the trumpet calling the turns of the streets to the men in vain, upbraiding them and those of the other two companies impartially, and few of his hearers denied the chief his right to express some chagrin, since the department, organized a



She was going to the fire.

half year, hard drilled and this its first fire worth the name, was late on account of the refusal of the members to move until they had donned their new uniforms, for the uniforms had arrived from Philadelphia two months ago, and tonight offered the first opportunity to display them in public.

"Hail Vanrevel!" panted Tappingham Marsh to Eugene Madrilion as the two, running in the van of the "hose company," splattered through a mud puddle. "You'd think he was Carewe's only son and heir instead of his worst enemy. Hark to the man!"

"I'd let it burn if I were he," returned the other.

"It was all Cralley's fault," said Tappingham, swinging an arm free to wipe the spattered mud from his face. "He swore he wouldn't budge without his uniform, and the rest only backed him up, that was all. Cralley said Carewe could better afford to lose his shanties than the overworked department its first chance to look beautiful and earnest. Tom asked him why he didn't send for a fiddle," Marsh finished, with a chuckle.

"Carewe might afford to lose a little, even a warehouse or two, if only out of what he's taken from Cralley and the rest of us these three years."

"Taken from Vanrevel, you mean. Who doesn't know where Cralley's—Here's Main street. Look out for the turn."

They swung out of the thick shadows of Carewe street into full view of the fire, and their faces were illuminated as by sunrise.

The warehouses stood on the river bank, at the foot of the street, just south of the new "covered bridge." There were four of them, huge, bare sided buildings, the two nearer the bridge of brick, the others of wood and all of them rich with stores of every kind of river merchandise and costly freight—furniture that had voyaged from New England down the long coast, across the Mexican gulf, through the flat delta and had made the winding journey up the great river a thousand miles and almost a thousand more, following the greater and lesser tributaries; cloth from Connecticut that had been sold in Philadelphia, then carried over mountains and through forests by steam, by canal, by stage and six mule freight wagons to Pittsburgh, down the Ohio and thence up to Rouen on the packet; Tennessee cotton, on its way to Massachusetts and Rhode Island spindles, lay there beside huge mounds of raw wool from Illinois, ready to be fed to the Rouen mill; dates and nuts from the Caribbean sea, lemons from groves of the faraway tropics, cigars from the Antilles, tobacco from Virginia and Kentucky; most precious of all, the great granary of the farmers' wheat from the level fields at home; and all the rich stores and the houses that held them, as well as the wharfs upon which they had been landed and the steamers that brought them up the Rouen river, belonged to Robert Carewe.

(To be Continued)

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