

The Two Vanrevels

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(CONTINUED.)

Mrs. Tanberry punctuated her observations with short volleys of husky laughter, so abrupt in both discharge



"My charming girl!"

and cessation that, until Miss Betty became accustomed to the habit, she was apt to start slightly at each salvo. "I had a husband—once," the lady resumed, "but only once, my friend! He had ideas like your father's—your father is such an imbecile—and he thought that wives, sisters, daughters and such like ought to be obedient—that is, the rest of the world was wrong unless it was right, and right was just his own little teeny squeezy prejudices and emotions dressed up for a crazy masquerade as facts. Poor man! He lasted only about a year!" And Mrs. Tanberry laughed heartily.

"They've been at me time and again to take another." She lowered her voice and leaned toward Betty confidentially. "Not I! I'd be willing to engage myself to Cralley Gray (though Cralley hasn't got round to me yet), for I don't mind just being engaged, my dear, but they'll have to invent something better than a man before I marry

any one of 'em again! But I love 'em, I do, the charming Billies! And you'll see how they follow me!" She patted the girl's shoulder, her small eyes beaming quizzically. "We'll have the gayest house in Rouen, ladybird! The young men all go to the Bareauds, but they'll come here now, and we'll have the Bareauds along with 'em. I've been away a long time; just finished unpacking yesterday night when your father came in after the fire. Who! What a state he was in, with that temper of his! Didn't I snap him up when he asked me to come and stay with you? Ha, ha! I'd have come even if you hadn't been beautiful, but I was wild to be your playmate, for I'd heard nothing but 'Miss Betty Carewe, Miss Betty Carewe,' from everybody I saw since the minute my stage came in. You set 'em all mad at your ball, and I knew we'd make a glorious household, you and I! Some of the vagabonds will turn up this very evening, you'll see if they don't. Ha, ha! The way they follow me!"

Mrs. Tanberry was irresistible. She filled the whole place otherwise than by the mere material voluminousness of her, bubbling over with froth of nonsense which flew through the house, driven by her energy, like sea foam on a spring gale, and the day, so discordantly begun for Miss Betty, grew musical with her own laughter, answering the husky staccato of the vivacious newcomer. Nelson waited upon them at table, radiant, his smile like the keyboard of an ebony piano, and his disappearances into the kitchen were accomplished by means of a surreptitious double shuffle and followed by the enigmatical echoes of the vain Mamie's reception of the visitor's salutes, which Nelson hastily retailed in passing.

Nor was Mrs. Tanberry's prediction allowed to go unfulfilled regarding the advent of those persons whom she had designated as vagabonds. It may have been out of deference to Mr. Carewe's sense of decorum or from a cautious regard of what he was liable to do when he considered that sense outraged that the gallants of Rouen had placed themselves under the severe restraint of allowing three days to elapse after their introduction to Miss Carewe before they "paid their respects at the house;" but, be that as it may, the dictator was now safely under way down the Rouen river, and Mrs. Tanberry reigned in his stead. Thus, at about 8 o'clock that evening, the two ladies sat

in the library engaged in conversation, though, for the sake of accuracy, it should be said that Mrs. Tanberry was engaged in conversation, Miss Betty in giving ear, when their attention was arrested by sounds of a somewhat musical nature from the lawn, which sounds were immediately identified as emanating from a flute and violin.

Mrs. Tanberry bounded across the room like a public building caught by a cyclone, and, dashing at the candles, "Blow 'em out, blow 'em out!" she exclaimed, suiting the action to the word in a flutter of excitement.

"Why?" asked Miss Carewe, startled, as she rose to her feet. The candles were out before the question.

"Why?" repeated the merry, husky voice in the darkness. "My goodness, child, precious, those vagabonds are here! To think of your never having been serenaded before!"

She drew the girl to the window and pointed to a group of dim figures near the blue bushes. "The dear, delightful vagabonds!" she chuckled. "I knew they'd come! It's the beautiful Tappingham Marsh with his fiddle and young Jeff Bareaud with his flute and 'Gene Madrilion and little Frank Chenoweth and thin Will Cummings to sing. Hark to the rascals!"

It is perfectly truthful to say that the violin and flute executed the prelude, and then the trio sounded full on the evening air, the more effective chords obligingly drawn out as long as the breath in the singers could hold them in order to allow the two fair auditors complete benefit of the harmony. They sang "The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls" and followed it with "Long, Long Ago."

"That," Mrs. Tanberry whispered between stifled gusts of almost uncontrollable laughter, "is meant for just me."

"Tell me the tales that to me were so dear," entreated the trio.

"I told 'em plenty," gurgled the enlivening widow, "and I expect between us we can get up some more."

"Now you are come my grief is removed," they sang.

"They mean your father is on his way to St. Louis," remarked Mrs. Tanberry.

"Let me forget that so long you have roved, Let me believe that you love as you loved Long, long ago, long ago."

"Applaud, applaud!" whispered Mrs. Tanberry, encouraging the minstrels by a hearty clapping of hands.

Then the candles were relit and the serenaders invited within. Nelson came bearing cake and wine, and the house was made merry. Presently the romp, Virginia Bareaud, making her appearance on the arm of General Trumble, Mrs. Tanberry led them all in a hearty game of blind man's buff, followed by as hearty a dancing of Dan Tucker. After that, a quadrille being proposed, Mrs. Tanberry suggested that Jefferson should run home and bring Fanchon for the fourth lady. However, Virginia explained that she had endeavored to persuade both her sister and Mr. Gray to accompany the general and herself, but that Mr. Gray had complained of indisposition, having suffered greatly from headache on account of inhaling so much smoke at the warehouse fire, and, of course, Fanchon would not leave him. (Miss Carewe permitted herself the slightest shrug of the shoulders.)

So they danced the quadrille with Jefferson at the piano and Mr. Marsh performing in the character of a lady, a proceeding most unacceptable to the general, whom Mrs. Tanberry forced to be his partner. And thus the evening passed gayly away. Tappingham Marsh spoke the truth, indeed, when he exclaimed in parting, "Oh, rare Mrs. Tanberry!"

But the house had not done with serenades that night. The guests had long since departed; the windows were still and dark under the wan old moon, which had risen lamely, looking unfamiliar and not half itself; the air bore an odor of lateness, and nothing moved, when a delicate harmony stole out of the shadows beyond the misty garden. Low but resonant chords sounded on the heavier strings of a guitar, while above them, upon the lighter wires, rippled a slender, tinkling melody that wooed the slumberer to a delicious half wakefulness as dreamily, as tenderly as the croon of rain on the roof soothes a child to sleep. Under the artist's cunning touch the instrument was both the accompaniment and the song, and Miss Betty, at first taking the music to be a wandering thread in the fabric of her own bright dreams, drifted gradually to consciousness to find herself smiling. Her eyes opened wide, but half closed again with the

ineffable sweetness of the sound.

Then a voice was heard, eerily low, yet gallant and clear, a vibrant baritone, singing to the guitar:

"My lady's hair,
That dark delight,
Is both as fair
And dusk as night."

I know some lovelorn hearts that beat
In time to moonbeam twinklings fleet,
That dance and glance like jewels there,
Emblazoning the raven hair.

"Ah, raven hair,
So dark and bright!
What love lies there
Enmeshed tonight?"

I know some sighing lads that say
Their hearts were snared and torn away,
And now as pearls one fate they share
Entangled in the raven hair.

"Ah, raven hair,
From such a plight
Could you not spare
One acolyte?"

I know a broken heart that went
To serve you but as ornament,
Alas, a ruby now you wear,
Enslaving the raven hair!"

The song had grown fainter and fainter, the singer moving away as he sang, and the last lines were almost in-



So they danced the quadrille.

audible in the distance. The guitar could be heard for a moment or two more, then silence came again. It was broken by a rustling in the room next to Miss Betty's, and Mrs. Tanberry called softly through the open door:

"Princess, are you awake? Did you hear that serenade?"

After a pause the answer came hesitatingly in a small, faltering voice: "Yes—if it was one. I thought perhaps he was only singing as he passed along the street."

"Aha!" ejaculated Mrs. Tanberry abruptly, as though she had made an unexpected discovery. "You knew better, and this was a serenade that you did not laugh at. Beautiful, I wouldn't let it go any further, even while your father is gone. Something might occur that would bring him home without warning. Such things have happened. Tom Vanrevel ought to be kept far away from this house."

"Oh, it was not he," returned Miss Betty quickly. "It was Mr. Gray. Did not you?"

"My dear," interrupted the other, "Cralley Gray's specialty is talking. Most of the vagabonds can sing and play a bit, and so can Cralley, particularly when he's had a few bowls of

punch, but when Tom Vanrevel touches the guitar and lifts up his voice to sing there isn't an angel in heaven that wouldn't quit the place and come to hear him! Cralley wrote those words to Virginia Bareaud. (Her hair is even darker than yours, you know.) That was when he was being engaged to her, and Tom must have set the music to 'em lately and now comes here to sing 'em to you, and well enough they fit you. But you must keep him away, princess."

Nevertheless Betty knew the voice was not that which had bid her look to the stars, and she remained convinced that it belonged to Mr. Cralley Gray, who had been too ill a few hours earlier to leave the Bareaud house, and now, with Fanchon's kisses on his lips, came stealing into her garden and sang to her a song he had made for another girl.

If there was one person in the world whom Miss Betty held in bitter contempt and scorn, it was the owner of that voice and that guitar.

CHAPTER X.

MORE than three gentlemen of Rouen were their hearts in their eyes for any fool to gaze upon, but three was the number of those who told their love before the end of the first week of Mr. Carewe's absence, and told it in spite of Mrs. Tanberry's utmost effort to pre-empt, at all times, a conjunction between herself and Miss Betty.

Miss Carewe honored each of the lorn three with a few minutes of gravity, but the gentle refusal prevented never a swain from being as truly her follower as before, not that she resorted to the poor device of half dismissal, the everyday method of the schoolgirl flirt, who thus keeps the lads in dalliance, but because, even for the rejected, it was a delight to be near her. For that matter, it is said that no one ever had enough of the mere looking at her. Also, her talk was enlivening even to the lively, being spiced with surprising turns and amiably seasoned with the art of badinage. To use the phrase of the time, she possessed the accomplishments, an antiquated charm now on the point of disappearing, so carefully has it been snubbed under whenever exhibited.

She sketched magnificently. This is the very strongest support for the assertion: Frank Chenoweth and Tappingham Marsh agreed, with tears of enthusiasm, that "magnificently" was the only word. They came to this conclusion as they sat together at the end of a long dinner, at which very little had been eaten, after a day's picnic by the river. Miss Carewe had been of their company, and Tappingham and Chenoweth found each his opportunity in the afternoon. The party was small and no one had been able to effect a total unconsciousness of the maneuvers of the two gentlemen. Even Fanchon Bareaud comprehended languidly, though she was more blurred than ever, and her faraway eyes belied the mechanical vivacity of her manner, for Cralley was thirty miles down the river with a fishing rod neatly packed in a leather case.

Mr. Vanrevel, of course, was not invited. No one would have thought of asking him to join a small party of which Robert Carewe's daughter was to be a member, but it was happiness

enough for Tom that night to lie hidden in the shrubbery looking up at the stars between the leaves while he listened to her harp and borne through the open window on enchanted airs the voice of Elizabeth Carewe singing "Robin Adair."

It was now that the town indulged its liveliest spirit. Never an evening lacked its junketing, while the happy folk of Rouen set the early summer to music. Serenade, dance and song for them, the light hearts, young and old making gay together. It was all laughter, either in sunshine or by candlelight, undisturbed by the far thunder below the southern horizon, where Zachary Taylor had pitched his tent, upon the Rio Grande.

One fair evening soon after that excursion which had proved fatal to the hopes of the handsome Tappingham and of the youthful Chenoweth it was the privilege of Mr. Thomas Vanrevel to assist Miss Carewe and her chaperon from their carriage as they drove up to a dance at the Bareauds'. This good fortune fell only to great deserving, for he had spent an hour lurking outside the house in the hope of performing such offices for them.

Heaven was in his soul, and the breath departed out of his body when, after a moment of hesitation, Miss Betty's little lace gauntleted glove was placed in his hand, and her white slipper shimmered out from the lilac flounces of her dress to fall like a benediction, he thought, on each of the carriage steps.

It was the age of garlands. They wreathed the muses, the seasons and their speech, so the women wore wreaths in their hair, and Miss Betty's that night was of marguerites. "Read your fortune in them all," whispered Tom's heart, "and of whomsoever you wish to learn every petal will say, 'He loves you; none declare he loves you not!'"

She bowed slightly, but did not speak to him, which was perhaps a better reception than that accorded the young man by her companion. "Oh, it's you, is it?" was Mrs. Tanberry's courteous observation as she canted the vehicle in her descent. She looked sharply at Miss Betty, and even the small glow of the carriage lamps showed that the girl's cheeks had flushed very red. Mr. Vanrevel, on the contrary, was pale.

They stood for a moment in awkward silence, while from the lighted house where the flying figures circled came the waltz, "I Dreamt That I Dwe-belt In Ma-har-ble Halls." Tom's own dreams were much wilder than the gypsy girl's, he knew that, yet he spoke out bravely:

"Will you dance the first two with me?"

(To be Continued.)

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