

The Two Vanrevels

By **BOOTH TARKINGTON**,
Author of "The Gentleman From Indiana" and "Monsieur Beaucaire"

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(CONTINUED.)

"No, you hadn't; that's true," observed Crailey reflectively. "You don't seem to have much to reproach her with, Tom."

"Reproach her?" cried the other. "That I should dream she would speak to me or have anything to do with me was to cast a doubt upon her loyalty as a daughter. She was right, I say! And she did the only thing she could do—rebuked me before them all. No one ever merited what he got more roundly than I deserved that. Who was I, in her eyes, that I should beseege her with my importunities, who but her father's worst enemy?"

Deep anxiety knitted Crailey's brow. "I understood she knew of the quarrel," he said thoughtfully. "I saw that the other evening when I helped her out of the crowd. She spoke of it on the way home, I remember. But how did she know that you were Vanrevel? No one in town would be apt to mention you to her."

"No, but she did know, you see." "Yes," returned Mr. Gray slowly, "so it seems. Probably her father told her to avoid you and described you so that she recognized you as the man who caught the kitten."

He paused and looked at Tom, who continued to pace up and down the



"It seems that I played once too often," floor. After a time Crailey, fumbling in his coat, found a long cheroot and as he lit it inquired casually:

"Do you remember if she addressed you by name?"

"I think not," Tom answered, halting.

"What does it matter?"

Crailey drew a deep breath.

"It doesn't," he returned.

"She knew me well enough," said Tom sadly as he resumed his sentry-
go.

"Yes," repeated Crailey deliberately. "So it seems! So it seems!" He blew a long stream of smoke out into the air before him and softly murmured again: "So it seems! So it seems!"

Silence fell, broken only by the sound of Tom's footsteps, until, presently, some one informally shouted his name from the street below. It was only Will Cummings passing the time of day, but when Tom turned from the window after answering him Crailey and his poem were gone.

That evening Vanrevel sat in the dusty office, driving himself to his work with a sharp goad, for there was a face that came between him and all else in the world and a voice that sounded always in his ears, but the work was done before he rose from his chair, though he showed a haggard visage as he bent above his candles to blow them out.

It was 11 o'clock. Crailey had not come back, and Tom knew that his light-hearted friend would not return for many hours, and so, having no mind to read and no belief that he could if he tried, he went out to walk the streets. He went down to the river first, and stood for a little while gazing at the ruins of the two warehouses, and that was like a man with a headache beating his skull against a wall. As he stood on the blackened wharf he saw how the charred beams rose above him against the sky like a gallow, and it seemed to him that nothing could have been a better symbol, for here he had hanged his self-respect. "Reproach her!" He, who had so displayed his imbecility before her! Had he been her father's best friend he should have had too great a sense of shame to dare to speak to her after that night, when her quiet intelligence had exhibited him to himself and to all the world as naught else than a fool—and a noisy one at that!

Suddenly a shudder convulsed him. He struck his open palm across his forehead and spoke aloud, while, from horizon to horizon, the night air grew thick with the whispered laughter of observing hobgoblins:

"And even if there had been no stairway, we could have slid down the hose line!"

He retraced his steps, a tall, gray figure moving slowly through the blue darkness, and his lips formed the heart-sick shadow of a smile when he found that he had unconsciously turned into Carewe street. Presently he came to a gap in a hedge, through which he had sometimes stolen to hear the sound of a harp and a girl's voice singing, but he did not enter there tonight, though he paused a moment, his head bowed on his breast.

There came a sound of voices. They seemed to be moving toward the hedge, toward the gap where he stood, one a man's, eager, quick, but very musical; the other a girl's, a rich and clear contralto that passed into Tom's soul like a psalm of rejoicing and like a scintilla of flame. He shivered and moved away quickly, but not before the man's voice, somewhat louder for the moment, came distinctly from the other side of the hedge.

"After all," said the voice, with a ripple of laughter—"after all, weren't you a little hard on that poor Mr. Gray?"

Tom did not understand, but he knew the voice. It was that of Crailey Gray.

He heard the same voice again that night and again stood unseen. Long after midnight he was still tramping the streets on his lonely rounds when he chanced to pass the Rouen House, which hostelry bore to the uninitiated eye the appearance of having closed its doors upon all hospitalities for the night in strict compliance with the law

of the city fathers, yet a slender wand of bright light might be discovered underneath the street door of the bar-room.

From within the merry retreat issued an uproar of shouting, raucous laughter and the pounding of glasses on tables, heralding all too plainly the hypocrisy of the landlord and possibly that of the city fathers also. Tom knew what company was gathered there—gamblers, truckmen, drunken farmers, men from the river steamers making riot while their boats lay at the wharf, with a motley gathering of good-for-nothings of the back alleys and tipping clerks from the Main street stores. There came loud cries for a song, and in answer the voice of Crailey rose over the general din, somewhat hoarse and never so musical when he sang as when he spoke, yet so touching in its dramatic tenderness that soon the noise fell away, and the roisterers sat quietly to listen. It was not the first time Ben Jonson's song had stilled a disreputable company:

"I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honoring thee
As giving it the hope that there
It might not wither'd be."

Perhaps just then Vanrevel would have wished to hear him sing anything in the world rather than that, for on Crailey's lips it carried too much meaning tonight, after the voice in the garden. And Tom lingered no more near the betraying sliver of light beneath the door than he had by the gap in the hedge, but went steadily on his way.

Not far from the hotel he passed a small building brightly lighted and echoing with unusual clamors of industry—the office of the Rouen Journal. The press was going, and Mr. Cummings' thin figure crossed and recrossed the windows, while his voice could be heard energetically bidding his assistants to "Look alive!" so that Tom imagined that something might have happened between the Nueces river and the Rio Grande, but he did not stop to ask the journalist, for he desired to behold the face of none of his friends until he had fought out some things within himself. So he strode on toward nowhere.

Day was breaking when Mr. Gray climbed the stairs to his room. There were two flights, the ascent of the first of which occupied about half an hour of Crailey's invaluable time, and the second might have taken more of it or possibly consumed the greater part of the morning had he received no assistance; but, as he reclined to meditate upon the first landing, another man entered the hallway from without, ascended quickly, and Crailey became pleasantly conscious that two strong hands had lifted him to his feet and presently that he was being borne aloft upon the newcomer's back. It seemed quite a journey, yet the motion was soothing, so he made no effort to open

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his eyes until he found himself gently deposited upon the couch in his own chamber, when he smiled amiably and, looking up, discovered his partner standing over him.

Tom was very pale, and there were deep violet scrawls beneath his eyes. For once in his life he had come home later than Crailey.

"First time, you know," said Crailey, with difficulty. "You'll admit first time completely incapable? Often needed guiding hand, but never—quite—before."

"Yes," said Tom quietly, "it is the first time I ever saw you quite finished."

"Think I must be growing old, and constitution refuses bear it. Disgraceful to be seen in condition, yet celebration justified. H'rah for the news!" He waved his hand wildly. "Old red, white and blue! American eagle now kindly proceed to scream! Star spangled banner intends streaming to all the trade winds! Sea to sea! Glorious victories on political thieving exhibition—no, expedition! Everybody not responsible for the trouble to go and get himself patriotically killed!"

"What do you mean?"

"Water!" said the other feebly. Tom brought the pitcher, and Crailey, setting his hot lips to it, drank long and deeply; then, with his friend's assistance, he tied a heavily moistened towel round his head. "All right very soon and sober again," he muttered and lay back upon the pillow with eyes tightly closed in an intense effort to concentrate his will. When he opened them again, four or five minutes later, they had marvelously cleared and his look was self-contained and sane.

"Haven't you heard the news?" He spoke much more easily now. "It came at midnight to the Journal."

"No; I've been walking in the country." "The Mexicans crossed the Rio Grande on the 26th of last month, captured Captain Thornton and murdered Colonel Crook. That means war is certain."

"It has been certain for a long time," said Tom. "Polk has forced it from the first."

"Then it's a pity he can't be the only man to die!"

"Have they called for volunteers?" asked Tom, going toward the door.

"No, but if the news is true they will."

"Yes," said Tom, and as he reached the hallway he paused. "Can I help you to undress?" "Certainly not!" Crailey sat up indignantly. "Can't you see that I'm perfectly sober? It was the merest temporary fit, and I've shaken it off. Don't you see?" He got upon his feet, staggered and came to the door with infirm steps.

"You're going to bed, aren't you?" asked Tom. "You'd much better."

"No," answered Crailey. "Are you?"

"No, I'm going to work."

"You've been all up night, too, haven't you?" Crailey put his hand on the other's shoulder. "Were you hunting for me?"

"No; not last night."

Crailey lurched suddenly, and Tom caught him about the waist to steady him.

"Sweethearting, tipping, ving-et-un or poker, eh, Tom?" he shouted thickly, with a wild laugh. "Ha, ha, old smug

face, up to my bad tricks at last!" But, recovering himself immediately, he pushed the other off at arm's length and slapped himself smartly on the brow. "Never mind; all right, all right—only a bad wave now and then. A walk will make me more a man than ever."

"You'd much better go to bed, Crailey."

"I can't. I'm going to change my clothes and go out."

"Why?"

Crailey did not answer, but at that moment the Catholic church bell, summoning the faithful to mass, pealed loudly on the morning air, and the steady glance of Tom Vanrevel rested upon the reckless eyes of the man beside him as they listened together to its insistent call. Tom said gently, almost timidly:

"You have an engagement?"

This time the answer came briskly. "Yes, I promised to take Fanchon to the cemetery before breakfast, to place some flowers on the grave of the little brother who died. This happens to be his birthday."

It was Tom who averted his eyes, not Crailey.

"Then you'd best hurry," he said hesitatingly; "I mustn't keep you," and went downstairs to his office with flushed cheeks, a hanging head and an expression which would have led a stranger to believe that he had just been caught in a lie.

He went to the Main street window and seated himself upon the ledge, the only one in the room not too dusty for occupation, for here, at this hour, Tom had taken his place every morning since Elizabeth Carewe had come from the convent. The window was a coign of vantage, commanding the corner of Carewe and Main streets. Some distance west of the corner the Catholic church cast its long shadow across Main street, and in order to enter the church a person who lived upon Carewe street must pass the corner or else make a half mile detour and approach from the other direction, which the person never did. Tom had thought it out the first night that the image of Miss Betty had kept him awake, and that was the first night Miss Carewe spent in Rouen. The St. Mary's girl would be sure to go to mass every day, which was why the window ledge was dusted the next morning.

The glass doors of the little corner drug store caught the early sun of the hot May morning and became like sheets of polished brass; a farmer's wagon rattled down the dusty street; a group of Irish waitresses from the hotel made the board walk rattle under their hurried steps as they went toward the church, talking to one another, and a blinking youth in his shirt sleeves, who wore the air of one newly but not gladly risen, began to struggle mournfully with the shutters of Madrilion's bank. A moment later Tom heard Crailey come down the stairs, sure of foot and humming lightly to himself. The door of the office was closed. Crailey did not look in, but presently appeared on the opposite side of the street and offered badinage to the boy who toiled at the shutters.

The bell had almost ceased to ring when a lady, dressed plainly in black, but graceful and tall, came rapidly out of Carewe street, turned at the corner by the little drug store and went to-

ward the church. The boy was left staring, for Crailey's banter broke off in the middle of a word.

He overtook her on the church steps, and they went in together.

That afternoon Fanchon Bareaud told Tom how beautiful her betrothed had been to her. He had brought her a great bouquet of violets and lilies of the valley and had taken her to the cemetery to place them on the grave of her baby brother, whose birthday it was. Tears came to Fanchon's eyes as she spoke of her lover's goodness and of how wonderfully he had talked as they stood beside the little grave.

"He was the only one who remembered that this was poor tiny Jean's birthday," she said and sobbed. "He came just after breakfast and asked me to go out there with him."

CHAPTER XII.

MR. CAREWE returned one warm May afternoon by the 6 o'clock boat, which was sometimes a day late and sometimes a few hours early, the latter contingency arising, as in the present instance, when the owner was aboard. Nelson drove him from the wharf to the bank, where he conferred briefly in an undertone with Eugene

Madrillon, after which Eugene sent a note containing three words to Tappingham Marsh. Marsh tore up the note and sauntered over to the club, where he found General Trumble and Jefferson Bareaud.

"He has come," said Tappingham, pleased to find the pair the only occupants of the place. "He saw Madrilion, and there's a session tonight."

"Praise the Lord!" exclaimed the stout general, rising to his feet. "I'll see old Chenoweth at once. My fingers have the itch."

"And mine, too," said Bareaud. "I'd begun to think we'd never have a go with him again."

"You must see that Crailey comes. We want a full table. Drag him if you can't get him any other way."

"He won't need urging," said Jefferson.

"But he cut us last time."

"He won't cut tonight. What hour?"

"Nine," answered Tappingham. "It's to be a full sitting, remember."

"Don't fear for us," laughed Trumble.

"Now for Crailey," Jefferson added. "After so long a vacation you couldn't keep him away if you chained him to the courthouse pillars. He'd tear 'em in two!"

But Jefferson did not encounter the alacrity of acceptance he expected from Crailey when he found him half an hour later at the hotel. Indeed, at first Mr. Gray not only refused outright, but seriously urged the same course upon Jefferson. Moreover, his remonstrance was offered in such good faith that Bareaud, in the act of swallowing one of his large doses of quinine, paused with only half the powder down his throat, gazing, nonplused, at his prospective brother-in-law.

(To be Continued)

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