

The Two Vanrevels

By **BOOTH TARKINGTON.**

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(CONTINUED.)

"My immortal soul!" he gasped. "Is this Crailley Gray? What's the trouble?"

"Nothing," replied Gray quietly. "Only don't go; you've lost enough."

"Well, you're a beautiful one!" Jefferson exclaimed, with an incredulous laugh. "You're a master hand. You talk about losing enough!"

"I know, I know," Crailley began, shaking his head, "but—"

"You've promised Fanchon never to go again, and you're afraid Miss Betty will see or hear us and tell her you were there."

"I don't know Miss Carewe."

"Then you needn't fear. Besides, she'll be out when we come and asleep when we go. She will never know we've been in the house."

"That has nothing to do with it," said Crailley impatiently, and he was the more earnest because he remembered the dangerous geography of the Carewe house, which made it impossible for any one to leave the cupola room except by the long hall which passed certain doors. "I will not go, and what's more, I promised Fanchon I'd try to keep you out of it hereafter."

"Lord, but you're virtuous!" laughed the incredulous Jefferson. "I'll come for you at a quarter to 9."

"I will not go, I tell you."

Jefferson roared. "Yes, you will. You couldn't keep from it if you tried!" And he took himself off, laughing violently, again promising to call for Crailley on his way to the tryst and leaving him still warmly protesting that it would be a great folly for either of them to go.

Crailley looked after the lad's long, thin figure with an expression as near anger as he ever wore. "He'll go," he said to himself.

"And—ah, well—I'll have to risk it! I'll go with him, but only to try to bring him away early—that is, as early as it's safe to be sure that they are asleep downstairs. And I won't play. No, I'll not play; I'll not play."

He went out of the hotel by a side door. Some distance up the street Bareaud was still to be seen, lounging homeward in the pleasant afternoon sunshine. He stopped on a corner and serenely poured another quinine powder into himself and threw the paper to a couple of pigs that looked up from the gutter maliciously.

"Confound him!" said Crailley, laughing ruefully. "He makes me a missionary—for I'll keep my word to Fanchon in that, at least! I'll look after Jefferson tonight. Ah, I might as well be old Tom Vanrevel, indeed!"

Meanwhile Mr. Carewe had taken possession of his own again. His daughter ran to the door to meet him. She was trembling a little and blushing and smiling, held out both her hands to him, so that Mrs. Tanberry vowed this was the loveliest creature in the world, and the kindest.

Mr. Carewe bowed slightly, as to an acquaintance, and disregarded the extended hands.

At that the blush faded from Miss Betty's cheeks, she trembled no more, and a salutation as icy as her father's was returned to him. He bent his heavy brows upon her and shot a black glance her way, being, of course, immediately enraged by her reflection of his own manner, but he did not speak to her.

Nor did he once address her during the evening meal, preferring to honor Mrs. Tanberry with his conversation, to that diplomatic lady's secret anger, but outward amusement. She cheerfully neglected to answer him at times, having not the slightest awe of him, and turned to the girl instead; indeed, she was only prevented from rating him soundly at his own table by the fear that she might make the situation more difficult for her young charge. As soon as it was possible she made her escape with Miss Betty, and they drove away in the twilight to pay visits of duty, leaving Mr. Carewe frowning at his coffee on the veranda.

When they came home three hours later Miss Betty noticed that a fringe of illumination bordered each of the heavily curtained windows in the cupola, and she uttered an exclamation, for she had never known that room to be lighted.

"Look!" she cried, touching Mrs. Tanberry's arm, as the horses trotted through the gates under a drizzle of rain. "I thought the room in the cupola was empty. It's always locked, and when I came from St. Mary's he told me that old furniture was stored there."

Mrs. Tanberry was grateful for the darkness. "He may have gone there to read," she answered in a queer voice. "Let us go quietly to bed, child, so as not to disturb him."

Betty had as little desire to disturb her father as she had to see him; therefore she obeyed her friend's injunction and went to her room on tiptoe. The house was very silent as she lit the candles on her bureau. Outside the gentle drizzle and the soothing tinkle from the eaves were the only sounds. Within there was but the faint rustle of garments from Mrs. Tanberry's room. Presently the latter ceased to be heard, and a wooden moan of protest from the four poster upon which the good lady reposed announced that she had drawn the curtains and wooed the rulers of Nod.

Although it was one of those nights of which they say, "It is a good night to sleep," Miss Betty was not drowsy. She had half unfastened one small sandal, but she tied the ribbons again and seated herself by the open window. Peering out into the dismal night, she found her own future as black, and it seemed no wonder that the sisters loved the convent life; that the pale nuns forsook the world wherein there was so much useless unkindness, where women were petty and jealous, like that cowardly Fanchon, and men who looked great were tricksters, like Fanchon's betrothed. Miss Betty clutched her delicate fingers. She would not remember that white, startled face again.

Another face helped her to shut out the recollection—that of the man who had come to mass to meet her yesterday morning and with whom she had taken a long walk afterward. He had shown her a quaint old English garden, who lived on the bank of the river, had bought her a bouquet, and she had helped him to select another to send to a sick friend. How beautiful the flowers were and how happy he had made the morning for her with his gayety, his lightness and his odd wisdom! Was it only yesterday? Her father's coming had made yesterday a fortnight old.

But the continuously pattering rain and the soft drip, drop from the roof, though as mournful as she chose to find them, began after awhile to weave their somnolent spells, and she slowly drifted from reveries of unhappy sorts into half dreams, in which she was still aware she was awake, yet slumber, heavy eyed, stirring from the curtains beside her with the small night breeze, breathed strange distortions upon familiar things, and drowsy impossibilities moved upon the surface of her thoughts. Her chin, resting upon her hand, sank gently until her head almost lay upon her relaxed arms.

"That is mine, Crailley Gray!"

She sprang to her feet, immeasurably startled, one hand clutching the back of her chair, the other tremulously pressed to her cheek, convinced that her father had stooped over her and shouted the sentence in her ear. For it was his voice, and the house rang with the words. All the rooms, halls, and even the walls, still seemed murmurous with the sudden sound, like the tinkling of a bell after it has been struck. And yet—everything was quiet.

She pressed her fingers to her forehead, trying to untangle the maze of dreams which had evolved this shock for her, the sudden clamor in her father's voice of a name she hated and hoped never to hear again, a name she was trying to forget, but as she was unable to trace anything which had led to it there remained only the conclusion that her nerves were not what they should be. The vapors having become obsolete for young ladies as an explanation for all unpleasant sensations, they were instructed to have "nerves." This was Miss Betty's first consciousness of her own, and, desiring no greater acquaintance with them, she told herself it was unwholesome to fall asleep in a chair by an open window when the night was as sad as she.

Turning to a chair in front of the small oval mirror of her bureau, she unclasped the brooch which held her lace collar and, seating herself, began to unfasten her hair. Suddenly she paused, her uplifted arms falling mechanically to her sides.

Some one was coming through the long hall with a soft, almost inaudible step, a step which was not her father's. She knew at once, with instinctive certainty, that it was not he. Nor was it Nelson, who would have shuffled; nor could it be the vain Mamie, nor one of the other servants, for they did not sleep in the house. It was a step more like a woman's, though certainly it was not Mrs. Tanberry's.

Betty rose, took a candle and stood silent for a moment, the heavy tresses of her hair, half unloosed, falling upon her neck and left shoulder like the folds of a dark drapery.

At the slight rustle of her rising the

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steps ceased instantly. Her heart set up a wild beating, and the candle shook in her hand. But she was brave and young, and, following an irresistible impulse, she ran across the room, flung open the door and threw the light of the candle into the hall, holding it at arm's length before her.

She came almost face to face with Crailley Gray.

The blood went from his cheeks as a swallow flies down from a roof. He started back against the opposite wall with a stifled groan, while she stared at him blankly and grew as deathly pale as he.

He was a man of great resource in all emergencies which required a quick tongue, but for the moment this was beyond him. He felt himself lost, toppling backward into an abyss, and the uselessness of his destruction made him physically sick. For he need not have been there; he had not wished to come; he had well counted the danger to himself, and this one time in his life had gone to the cupola room out of good nature. But Bareaud had been obstinate, and Crailley had come away alone, hoping that Jefferson might follow. And here he was, poor trapped rat, convicted and ruined because of a good action! At last he knew consistency to be a jewel and that a greedy boy should never give a crust; that a fool should stick to his folly, a villain to his devilry and each hold his own; for the man who thrusts a good deed into a life of lies is wound about with perilous passes, and in his devious ways a thousand unexpected damnations spring.

Beaten, stunned, hang-jawed with despair, he returned her long, dumfounded gaze hopelessly and told the truth like an inspired dunc.

"I came—I came—to bring another man away," he whispered brokenly;



Face to face with Crailley Gray.

and, at the very moment, several heavy, half suppressed voices broke into eager talk overhead.

The white hand that held the candle wavered, and the shadows gilded in a huge, grotesque dance. Twice she essayed to speak before she could do so, at the same moment motioning him back, for he had made a vague gesture toward her.

"I am not faint. Do you mean, away from up there?" She pointed to the cupola stairs.

"Yes."

"Have—have you seen my father?" The question came out of such a depth of incredulosity that it was more an articulation of the lips than a sound, but he caught it, and, with it, not hope, but the shadow of a shadow of hope, a hand waving from the far shore to the swimmer who has been down twice. Did she fear for his sake?"

"No—I have not seen him." He was groping blindly.

"You did not come from that room?"

"No."

"How did you enter the house?"

The draft through the hall was blowing upon him; the double doors upon the veranda had been left open for coolness. "There," he said, pointing to them.

"But—I heard you come from the other direction."

He was breathing quickly. He saw his chance—if Jefferson Bareaud did not come now.

"You did not hear me come down the stairs." He leaned toward her, risking it all on that.

"No."

"Ah!" A sigh too like a gasp burst from Crailley. His head lifted a little, and his eyes were luminous with an eagerness that was almost anguish. He set his utmost will at work to collect himself and to think hard and fast.

"I came here resolved to take a man away, come what would!" he said. "I found the door open, went to the foot of that stairway, then I stopped. I remembered something. I turned and was going away when you opened the door."

"You remembered what?"

The flicker of hope in his breast increased prodigiously, and the rush of it took the breath from his throat and choked him. Good God! Was she going to believe him?

"I remembered—you?"

"What?" she said wonderingly.

Art returned with a splendid bound, full pinioned, his beautiful and treacherous familiar who had deserted him at the crucial instant, but she made up for it now, folding him in protective wings and breathing through his spirit. In rapid and vehement whispers he poured out the words upon the girl in the doorway.

"I have a friend, and I would lay down my life to make him what he could be. He has always thrown everything away, his life, his talents, all his money and all of mine, for the sake of—throwing them away! Some other must tell you about that room, but it has ruined my friend. Tonight I discovered that he had been summoned here, and I made up my mind to come and take him away. Your father has sworn to shoot me if I set foot in his house or on ground of his. Well, my duty was clear, and I came to do it. And yet I stopped at the foot of the stair because—because I remembered that you were Robert Carewe's daughter. What of you if I went up and harm came to me from your father? For I swear I would not have touched him! You asked me not to speak of 'personal' things, and I have obeyed you, but you see I must tell you one thing now, I have cared for this friend

of mine more than for all else under heaven, but I turned and left him to his ruin and would a thousand times

rather than bring trouble upon you! 'A thousand times?' Ah, I swear it shall be a thousand times a thousand!"

He had paraded in one speech from the prisoner's dock to Capulet's garden, and her eyes were shining into his like a great light when he finished. "Go quickly!" she whispered. "Go quickly! Go quickly!"

"But do you understand?"

"Not yet, but I shall. Will you go? They might come—my father might come—at any moment."

"But—"

"Do you want to drive me quite mad? Please go!" She laid a trembling, urgent hand upon his sleeve.

"Never, until you tell me that you understand," replied Crailley firmly, listening keenly for the slightest sound from overhead. "Never—until then!"

"When I do I shall tell you; now I only know that you must go."

"But tell me!"

"You must go!"

There was a shuffling of chairs on the floor overhead, and Crailley went. He went even more hastily than might have been expected from the adamant attitude he had just previously assumed. Realizing this as he reached the wet path, he risked stealing round to her window.

"For your sake!" he breathed, and, having thus forestalled any trifling imperfection which might arise in her recollection of his exit from the house, he disappeared, kissing his hand to the rain as he ran down the street.

Miss Betty locked her door and pulled close the curtains of her window. A numerous but careful sound of footsteps came from the hall, went by her door and out across the veranda. Silently she waited until she heard her father go alone to his room.

She took the candle and went in to Mrs. Tanberry. She set the light upon a table, pulled a chair close to the bedside and placed her cool hand lightly on the great lady's forehead.

"Isn't it very late, child? Why are you not asleep?"

"Mrs. Tanberry, I want to know why there was a light in the cupola room tonight?"

"What?" Mrs. Tanberry rolled herself as upright as possible and sat with blinking eyes.

"I want to know what I am sure you know and what I am sure everybody knows except me. What were they doing there tonight, and what was the quarrel between Mr. Vanrevel and my father that had to do with Mr. Gray?"

Mrs. Tanberry gazed earnestly into the girl's face. After a long time she said in a gentle voice:

"Child, has it come to matter that much?"

"Yes," said Miss Betty.

(To be Continued)

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