

# The Two Vanrevels

By **BOOTH TARKINGTON,**

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

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(CONTINUED.)

"I think it's best for you to tell me," said Crailey.

"You think so?" Tom's embarrassment increased visibly, and there was mingled with it an odd appearance of apprehension, probably to relieve which he very deliberately took two long cheroots from his pocket, laid one on the desk for Crailey and lit the other himself with extreme carefulness at the candle. After this ceremonial he dragged a chair to the window, tilted back in it with his feet on the low sill, his back to the thin light and his friend, and said in a slow, gentle tone:

"Well, Crailey?"

"I suppose you mean that I ought to offer my explanation first?" said the other, still standing. "Well, there isn't any." He did not speak doggedly or sullenly, as one in fault, but more with the air of a man curiously ready to throw all possible light upon a cloudy phenomenon. "It's very simple—all that I know about it. I went there first on the evening of the Madrillon masquerade and played a little comedy for her, so that some of my theatrical allusions—they weren't very illu-

minating—to my engagement to Fanchon made her believe I was Vanrevel when her father told her about the pair of us. I discovered that the night his warehouses burned—and I saw something more, because I can't help seeing such things—that yours was just the character to appeal to a young girl fresh from the convent and full of honesty and fine dreams and fire. No-

boby could arrange a more fatal fascination for a girl of nineteen than to have a deadly quarrel with her father. And that's especially true when the father's like that mad brute of a Bob Carewe! Then, too, you're more or less the town model of virtue and popular hero, in spite of the abolitionism, just as I am the town scamp. So I let it go on and played a little at being you, saying the things that you only think—that was all. It isn't strange that it lasted until now, not more than three weeks, after all. She's only seen you four or five times and me not much oftener. No one speaks of you to her, and I've kept out of sight when others were about. Mrs. Tanberry is her only close friend and, naturally, wouldn't be apt to mention that you are dark and I am fair or to describe you personally any more than you and I would mention the general appearance of people we both meet about town. But you needn't tell me that it can't last much longer. Some petty, unexpected trifle will turn up, of course. All that I want to know is what you mean to do."

"To do?" repeated Tom softly and blew a long-scarf of smoke out of the window.

"Ah!" Crailey's voice grew sharp and loud. "There are many things you needn't tell me. You need not tell me what I've done to you nor what you think of me. You need not tell me that you have others to consider; that you have Miss Carewe to think of. Don't you suppose I know that? And you need not tell me that you have a duty to Fanchon!"

"Yes," Tom broke in, his tone not quite steady—"yes, I've thought of that."

"Well?"

"Have you—did you?" He hesitated, but Crailey understood immediately.

"No; I haven't seen her again."

"But you?"

"Yes, I wrote. I answered the letter."

"As?"

"Yes; I signed your name. I told you that I had just let things go on," Crailey answered, with an impatient movement of his hands. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going over to see the governor in the morning. I'll be away two or three days, I imagine."

"Vanrevel," exclaimed Crailey hotly, "will you give me an answer and not beat about the bush any longer, or do you mean that you refuse to answer?"

Tom dropped his cigar upon the brick window ledge with an abysmal sigh. "Oh, no; it isn't that," he answered mildly. "I've been thinking it all over for three days in the country, and when I got back tonight I found that I had come to a decision without knowing it and that I had come to it even before I started. My leaving the letter for you proved it. It's a little like this Mexican war—a mixed up problem. The thing is bound to happen, and you can't stop it. I believe the men who make this war for their own uses will suffer for it. But it is made, and there's only one thing I can see as the thing for me to do. They've called me every name on earth—and the same with you,

too, Crailey—because I'm an abolitionist, but now, whether the country has signed or not, a good many thousand men have got to do the bleeding for her, and I want to be one of them. That's the one thing that is plain to me."

"Yes," returned Crailey. "You know I'm with you, and I think you're always right. Yes, we'll all be on the way in a fortnight or so. Do you mean you won't quarrel with me because of that? Do you mean it would be a poor time now, when we're all going out to take our chances together?"

"Quarrel with you!" Tom rose and came to the desk, looking across it at his friend. "Did you think I might do that?"

"Yes—I thought so."

"Crailey!" And now Tom's expression showed desperation. It was that of a man whose apprehensions have culminated and who is forced to face a crisis long expected, long averted, but imminent at last. His eyes fell from Crailey's clear gaze, and his hand fidgeted among the papers on the desk.

"No," he began with a painful lameness and hesitation. "I did not mean it—no. I meant that, in the same way, only one thing in this other—this other affair that seems so confused and is such a problem—only one thing has

so simultaneously that the bang of the piano lid and the curse were even as the report of a musket and the immediate cry of the wounded.

Mrs. Tanberry at once debouched upon the piazza, showing a vast, clouded countenance. "And I hope to heaven you already had a headache!" she exclaimed.

"The courtesy of your wish, madam," Carewe replied, with an angry flush of his eye, "is only equaled by the kindness of heaven in answering it. I have, in fact, a headache. I always have nowadays."

"That's good news," returned the lady heartily.

"I thank you," retorted her host.

"Perhaps if you treated your daughter with even a decent Indian's kind of politeness you'd enjoy better health."

"Ah! And in what failure to perform my duty toward her have I incurred your displeasure?"

"Where is she now?" exclaimed the other excitedly. "Where is she now?"

"I cannot say."

"Yes, you can, Robert Carewe!" Mrs. Tanberry retorted, with a wrathful gesture. "You know well enough she's in her own room, and so do I, for I tried to get in to comfort her when I heard her crying. She's in there with the door bolted, where you drove her!"

"I drove her!" he sneered.

"Yes; you did, and I heard you. Do you think I couldn't hear you raging and storming at her like a crazy man? Why can't you be a good father to her?"

"Perhaps you might begin by asking her to be a good daughter to me."

"What has she done?"

"The night before I went away she ran to a fire and behaved there like a common street hoiden. The ladies of the Carewe family have not formerly acquired a notoriety of that kind."

"Bah!" said Mrs. Tanberry.

"The next morning, when I taxed her with it, she dutifully defied and insulted me."

"I can imagine the delicacy with which you 'taxed' her. What has that to do with your devilish tantrums of this afternoon, Robert Carewe?"

"I am obliged to you for the expression," he returned. "When I came home this afternoon I found her reading that thing." He pointed to many very small fragments of Mr. Cummings' newspaper, which were scattered about the lawn near the veranda.

"Well?"

"Do you know what that article was, madam, do you know what it was?" Although breathing heavily, Mr. Carewe had compelled himself to a certain outward calmness, but now, in the uncontrollable agitation of his anger, he sprang to his feet and struck one of the wooden pillars of the porch a shocking blow with the bare knuckles of his clenched hand. "Do you know what it was? It was an eulogy of that Vanrevel! It pretended to be an account of the enrollment of his infernal company, but it was nothing more than a glorification of that nigger loving hound! His company—a lot of sneaks, who'll run like sheep from the first greaser—elected him captain yesterday, and today he received an appointment as major! It dries the blood in my veins to think of it—that black dog a major! Heavens, am I never to hear the last of him? Cummings wrote it, the fool, the lying, fawning, slobber-

ing fool. He ought to be shot for it! Neither he nor his paper ever enters my doors again! And I took the dirty sheet from her hands and tore it to pieces!"

"Yes," interposed Mrs. Tanberry, "it looks as if you had done it with your teeth."

"—and stamped it into the ground!"

"Oh, I heard you!" she said.

Carewe came close to her and gave her a long look from such bitter eyes that her own fell before them. "If you've been treacherous to me, Jane Tanberry," he said, "then God punish you! If they've met—my daughter and that man—while I was away, it is on your head."

He turned and walked to the door, while the indomitable Mrs. Tanberry, silenced for once, sank into the chair he had vacated. Before he disappeared within the house he paused.

"If Mr. Vanrevel has met my daughter," he said in a thick voice, stretching out both hands in a strange, menacing gesture toward the town that lay darkling in the growing dusk, "if he has addressed one word to her or so much as allowed his eyes to rest on her overlong, let him take care of himself!"

"Oh, Robert, Robert!" Mrs. Tanberry cried in a frightened whisper to herself. "All the fun and brightness went out of the world when you came home!"

But there were other reasons than the return of Robert Carewe why Rouen had lost the joy and mirth that belonged to it. Nay, the merry town had changed beyond all credence. It was hushed like a sickroom and dolefully murmurous with forebodings of farewell and sorrow.

For all the very flower of Rouen's youth had promised to follow Tom Vanrevel on the long and arduous journey to Mexico, to march burning miles under the tropical sun, to face strange fevers and the guns of Santa Anna.

Few were the houses of the more pretentious sort that did not mourn in prospect the going of son or brother or close friend. Mothers already wept not in secret, fathers talked with husky bravado, and every one was very kind to those who were to go, speaking to them gently and bringing them little foolish presents. Nor could the hearts of girls now longer mask as blocks of ice to the prospective conquistadores. Eugene Madrillon's young brother, Jean, after a two years' Beatrice and Benedict wooing of Trixie Chenoweth, that notable spitfire, announced his engagement upon the day after his enlistment and recounted to all who would listen how his termagant fell upon his neck in tears when she heard the news. "And now she cries about me all the time," finished the frank Jean blithely.

But there was little spirit for the old merriments. Fanchon, Virginia and five or six others spent their afternoons mournfully, and yet proudly, sewing and cutting large pieces of colored silk, fashioning a great flag for their sweethearts and brothers to bear southward and plant where stood the palace of the Montezumas.

That was sad work for Fanchon, though it was not for her brother's sake that she wept, since, as every one knew, Jefferson was already so full of malaria and quinine that the fevers of the south and Mexico must find him invulnerable, and even his mother be-

lieved he would only thrive and grow hearty on his soldiering. But about Crailey Fanchon had a presentiment more vivid than any born of the natural fears for his safety. It came to her again and again, reappearing in her dreams. She shivered and started often as she worked on the flag, then bent her fair head low over the gay silks, while the others glanced at her sympathetically. And when the flag was completed save for sewing the stars upon the blue ground she took it away from the others and insisted upon finishing the work herself.

It was at this juncture, when the weeping of women was plentiful, when old men pulled long faces and the very urchins of the street observed periods of gravity and even silence, that a notion entered the head of Mrs. Tanberry—young Nancy Tanberry—to the effect that such things were all wrong. She declared energetically that this was no decent fashion of farewell; that after the soldiers went away there would be time enough to enact the girls they had left behind them, and



There was a silence while they looked at each other.

grown clear. It doesn't seem to me that—that"—here he drew a deep breath before he went on with increasing nervousness—"that if you like a man and have lived with him a good many years—that is to say, if you're really much of a friend to him, I don't believe you sit on a high seat and judge him. Judging and all that haven't much part in it, and it seems to me that you've got yourself into a pretty bad mixup, Crailey."

"Yes," said Crailey. "It's pretty bad."

"Well," Tom looked up now with an almost tremulous smile. "I believe that is about all I can make of it. Do you think it's the part of your best friend to expose you? It seems to me that if there ever was a time when I ought to stand by you it's now."

There was a silence while they looked at each other across the desk in the faint light. Tom's eyes fell again as Crailey opened his lips.

"And in spite of everything," Crailey said breathlessly, "you mean that you won't tell?"

"How could I, Crailey?" said Tom Vanrevel as he turned away.

CHAPTER XV.

"Methought I met a damsel fair,  
And tears were in her eyes;  
Her head and arms were bare;  
I heard her bursting sighs."

"I stopped and looked her in the face,  
'Twas then she sweetly smiled,  
Her features shone with mournful grace  
Far more than nature's child."

"With diffident and downcast eye,  
In modest tones she spoke,  
She wiped a tear and gave a sigh  
And then her silence broke!"

SO sang Mrs. Tanberry at the piano, relieving the melancholy which possessed her, but Nelson, pausing in the hall to listen and exceedingly curious concerning the promised utterance of the damsel fair, was to suffer disappointment, as the ballad was broken off abruptly and the songstress closed the piano with a monstrous clatter. Little doubt may be entertained that the noise was designed to disturb Mr. Carewe, who sat upon the veranda consulting a strong cigar, and less that the intended insult was accomplished. For an expression of a vindictive nature was precipitated in that quarter

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Mrs. Tanberry came in and worshiped it, that until then the town should be made enlivening. So she went about preaching a revival of cheerfulness.

Nor was her vigor spent in vain. It was decided that a ball should be given to the volunteers of Rouen two nights before their departure for the state rendezvous, and it should be made the noblest festival in Rouen's history. The subscribers took their oath to it.

Miss Betty laid out her prettiest dress that evening, and Mrs. Tanberry came in and worshiped it as it rested, like foam of lavender and white and gray, upon the bed, beside the snowy gloves with their tiny, stiff lace gauntlets, while two small white sandal slippers, with jeweled buckles where the straps crossed each other, were being fastened upon Miss Betty's silken feet by the vain and gloating Mamie.

(To be Continued)

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