

# The Two Vanrevels

By **BOOTH TARKINGTON**,  
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(CONTINUED.)

A rocket went up from the Rouen House, then another, followed by a salvo of anvils and a racking discharge of small arms, the beginning of a noble display of fireworks in celebration of the prospective victories of the United States and the utter discomfiture of the Mexicans when the Rouen volunteers should reach the seat of war, an exhibition of patriotism which brought little pleasure to Mr. Vanrevel.

But over the noise of the street he heard his own name shouted from the stairway, and almost instantly a violent knocking assailed the door. Before he could bid the visitor enter, the door was flung open by a stout and excited colored woman who, at sight of him, threw up her hands in tremulous thanksgiving. It was the vain Mamie.

She sank into a chair and rocked herself to and fro, gasping to regain her lost breath. "Bless de good God 'imighty, you ain' gone out!" she panted. "I run an' I run, an' I come so fas' I got stitches in de side f'um head to heel!"

Tom brought her a glass of water, which she drank between gasps.

"I nevah run so befo' enduin' my livin' days," she asserted. "You knows me, who I am an' whum I cum f'um, nigh's well's I knows who you is, I reckon, Maje' Vanrevel?"

"Yes, yes, I know. Will you tell me who sent you?"

"Miz Tanberry, suh, dat who sended me, an' in a venomous hurry she done de same!"

"Yes. Why? Does she want me?" Mamie emitted a screech. "'Deed she mos' everlastin'ly does not! Dat de vey' exackindes' livin' t'ing she does not want!"

"Then what is it, Mamie?"

"Lemme git my bref, suh, an' you hole yo'ne whiles I tell you! She say to me, she say, 'Is you 'quainted Maje' Vanrevel, Mamie?' s' she, an' I up'n' ansuh, 'Not to speak wid, but dey ain' none on 'em I don' knows by sight, an' none better dan him, I say. Den she say, she say, 'You run all de way an' fin' dat young man,' she say, s' she, 'an' if you don' git dah fo' he leave, er don' stop him on de way, den God 'imighty fergive you!' she say. 'But you tell him f'um Jane Tanberry not to come nigh dis house or dis gyabden dis night! Tell him dat Jane Tanberry warn him he mus' keep outer Carewe's way ontel he safe on de boat tomorrer. Tell him Jane Tanberry beg him to stay in he own room dis night, an' dat she beg it on her bented knees!' An' dis she say to me when I tole her what Nelson see in dat house dis evenin'. An' hyuh I is, an' hyuh you is, an' de blessed Jesus be thank', you is hyuh!"

Tom regarded her with a grave attention. "What made Mrs. Tanberry think I might be coming there tonight?"

"Dey's curious goin's on in dat house, suh! De young lady, she ain' like herself. All de day long she wanduh up an' down an' roun' about. Miz Tanberry are a mighty guesseying woman, an' de minute I tell her what Nelson see she s'pec' you a-comin' an' dat de boss mos' p'intedly preparin' fo' it!"

"Can you make it a little clearer for me, Mamie? I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Well, suh, you know dat ole man Nelson; he allays tell me ev'yt'ing he know an' ev'yt'ing he think he know, jass de same, suh. An' dat ole Nelse, he mos' seessful cull'd man in de worl' to crope roun' de house an' pick up de gossip an' git de 'fo' an' behine er what's goin' on. So 'twas dat he see de boss, when he come in to des evenin', tek dat heavy musket off'n de racks an' load an' clean her, an' he do it wid a mighty bad look 'bout de mouf. Den he gone up to de cupoly an' lef' it dah an' den come down ag'in. Whiles dey all is eatin' he 'nounce th'ee time dat he goin' be 'way enduin' de evenin'. Den he gone out de front do' an' out de gates an' down de street. Den, suh, den, suh, 'tain't no mo'n a half 'n' our ago, Nelse come to me an' say dat he see de boss come roun' de stable, keepin' close in by de shrubbery, an' crope in de ball-room winder, w'ich is close to de groun', suh. Nelse 'uz a cleanin' he harness in de back yo'd, an' he let on not to see him, like. Miz Betty, she walkin' in her ghyabden an' Miz Tanberry fan' on de po'ch. Nelse, he slip de house whuh de lights ain' lit an' stan' an' listen long time in de liberry at de foot er dem sta'ns, an' he hyuh dat man move, suh! Den Nelse know dat he done crope up to de cupoly room an'—an' dat he settin' dah, waitin'!"

Soze he come an' tole me, an' I beg Miz Tanberry come in de kitchen, an' I shet de do' an' I tole her. An' she sended me hyuh to you, suh. An' if

you 'uz a-goin', de good God 'imighty mus' er kep' you ontel I got hyuh!"

"No, I wasn't going." Tom smiled upon her sadly. "I dare say there's a simpler explanation. Don't you suppose that if Nelson was right and Mr. Carewe really did come back it was because he did not wish his daughter and Mrs. Tanberry to know that—that he expected a party of friends, possibly, to join him there later?"

"What he doin' wid dat gun, suh? Nobody goin' play cyahds ner frow dice wid a gun, is dey?" asked Mamie as she rose and walked toward the door.

"Oh, that was probably by chance." "No, suh!" she cried vehemently. "An' dem gelmun wouldn't play t'night no way; mos' on 'em goin' wid you tomorrer, an' dey sayin' goodby to de'r folks dis evenin', not gamblin'! Miz Tanberry 'll be in a state er mine ontel she hyuh f'um me, an' I goin' hurry back. You won' come dar, suh? I kin tell her dat you say you sutney ain' comin' nigh our neighborhood dis night?"

"I had not dreamed of coming, tell her, please. Probably I shall not go out at all this evening. But it was kind of you to come. Good night."

He stood with a candle to light her down the stairs, but after she had gone he did not return to the office. Instead, he went slowly up to his own room, glancing first into Cralley's—the doors of neither were often locked—to behold a chaos of disorder and unfinished packing. In his own chamber it only remained for him to close the lids of a few big boxes and to pack a small trunk which he meant to take with him to the camp of the state troops and he would be ready for departure. He set about this task and, concluding that there was no necessity to wear his uniform on the steamboat, decided to place it in the trunk and went to the bed where he had folded and left it. It was not there; nor did a thorough search reveal it anywhere in the room. Yet no one could have stolen it, for when he had gone down to the office Cralley had remained on this floor. Mamie had come within a few minutes after Cralley went out, and during his conversation with her the office door had been open; no one could have passed without being seen. Also, a thief would have taken other things as well as the uniform, and surely Cralley must have heard; Cralley would—Cralley!

Then Tom remembered the figure in the long cloak and the military cap and with a sick heart began to understand. He had read the Journal, and he knew why Cralley might wish to masquerade in a major's uniform that night. If Miss Carewe read it, too, and a strange wonder rose in her mind, this and a word would convince her. Tom considered it improbable that the wonder would rise, for circumstances had too well established her in a mistake, trivial and ordinary enough at first, merely the confusing of two names by a girl new to the town, but so strengthened by every confirmation Cralley's doubt could compass that she would no doubt only set Cummings' paragraph aside as a newspaper error. Still Cralley had wished to be on the safe side.

Tom sighed rather bitterly. He was convinced that the harlequin would come home soon, replace the uniform (which was probably extremely becoming to him, as they were of a height and figure much the same) and afterward in his ordinary dress would sally forth to spend his last evening with Fauchou. Tom wondered how Cralley would feel and what he would think about himself while he was changing his clothes, but he remembered his partner's extraordinary powers of mental adjustment, and for the first time in his life Vanrevel made no allowance for the other's temperament, and there came to him a moment when he felt that he could almost dislike Cralley Gray.

At all events, he would go out until Cralley had come and gone again, for he had no desire to behold the masquerader's return. So he exchanged his dressing gown for a coat, fastened his collar and had begun to arrange his cravat at the mirror when suddenly the voice of the old negress seemed to sound close beside him in the room: "He's settin' dah—waitin'!"

The cravat was never tied. Tom's hands dropped to his sides as he started back from the staring face in the mirror. Robert Carewe was waiting, and Cralley— All at once there was but one vital necessity in the world for Tom Vanrevel—that was to find Cralley. He must go to Cralley even in Carewe's own house. He must go to Cralley!

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He dashed down the stairs and into the street. The people were making a great uproar in front of the hotel, exploding bombs, firing muskets in the air, sending up rockets, and, rapidly crossing the outskirts of the crowd, he passed into Carewe street unnoticed. Here the detonations were not so deafening, though the little steamboat at the wharf was contributing to the confusion with all in her power, screaming simultaneously approval of the celebration and her last signals of departure.

At the first corner Tom had no more than left the sidewalk when he came within a foot of being ridden down by two horsemen who rode at so desperate a gallop that, the sound of their hoof beats being lost in the uproar from Main street, they were upon him before he was aware of them.

He leaped back with an angry shout to know who they were that they rode so wildly. At the same time a sharp explosion at the foot of the street sent a red flare over the scene, a flash, gone with such incredible swiftness into renewed darkness that he saw the flying horsemen almost as equestrian statues illumined by a flicker of lightning, but he saw them with the same distinctness that lightning gives and recognized the former as Robert Carewe, and in the instant of that recognition Tom knew what had happened to Cralley Gray, for he saw the truth in the ghastly face of his enemy.

Carewe rode stiffly, like a man frozen upon his horse, and his face was like that of a frozen man, his eyes glassy and not fixed upon his course, so that it was a deathly thing to see. Once, long ago, Tom had seen a man riding for his life, and he wore this same look. The animal bounded and swerved under Vanrevel's enemy in the mad rush down the street, but he sat rigid, bolt upright in the saddle, his face set to that look of coldness.

The second rider was old Nelson, who rode with body crouched forward, his eyeballs like shining porcelain set in ebony and his arm like a flail, cruelly lashing his own horse and his master's with a heavy whip.

"De steamboat!" he shouted hoarsely, bringing down the lash on one and then on the other. "De steamboat, de steamboat! Fo' God's sake, honey, de steamboat!"

They swept into Main street, Nelson leaning far across to the other's bridle and turning both horses toward the river, but before they had made the corner Tom Vanrevel was running with all the speed that was in him toward his enemy's house. The one block between him and that forbidden ground seemed to him miles long, and he felt that he was running as a man in a dream and at the highest pitch of agonized exertion, covering no space, but only working the air in one place, like a treadmill. All that was in his mind, heart and soul was to reach Cralley. He had known by the revelation of Carewe's face in what case he would find his friend, but as he ran he put the knowledge from him with a great shudder and resolved upon incredulity in spite of his certainty. All he let himself feel was the need to run, to run until he found Cralley, who was somewhere in the darkness of the trees about the long, low house on the corner. When he reached the bordering hedge he did not stay for gate or path,

but with a loud shout hurled himself half over, half through, the hedge, like a bolt from a catapult.

Lights shone from only one room in the house, the library, but as he ran toward the porch a candle flickered in the hall, and there came the sound of a voice weeping with terror.

At that he called more desperately upon his incredulity to aid him, for the voice was Mrs. Tanberry's. If it had been any other than she who sobbed so hopelessly, she who was always steady and strong! If he could



Beside him knelt Miss Betty.

he would have stopped to pray now before he faced her and the truth, but his flying feet carried him on.

"Who is it?" she gasped brokenly from the hall. "Mamie, have you brought him?"

"It's I!" he cried as he plunged through the doorway. "It's Vanrevel!"

Mrs. Tanberry set the iron candlestick down upon the table with a crash. "You've come too late!" she sobbed. "Another man has taken your death on himself."

He reeled back against the wall. "O God!" he said. "Cralley!"

"Yes," she answered. "It's the poor vagabond that you loved so well."

Together they ran through the hall to the library. Cralley was lying on the long sofa, his eyes closed, his head like a piece of carven marble, the gay uniform in which he had tricked himself out so gallantly open at the throat and his white linen stained with a few little splashes of red.

Beside him knelt Miss Betty, holding her lace handkerchief upon his breast. She was as white as he and as motionless, so that as she knelt there, immovable, beside him, her arm, like alabaster, across his breast, they might have been a sculptor's group. The handkerchief was stained a little, like the linen, and, like it, too, stained but a little. Near by on the floor stood a flask of brandy and a pitcher of water.

"You!" Miss Betty's face showed no change nor even a faint surprise as her eyes fell upon Tom Vanrevel, but her lips soundlessly framed the word, "You!"

Tom fung himself on his knees beside her.

"Cralley!" he cried in a sharp voice that had a terrible shake in it. "Cralley! Cralley, I want you to hear me!" He took one of the limp hands in his and began to chafe it, while Mrs. Tanberry grasped the other.

"There's still a movement in the pulse," she faltered.

"Still!" echoed Tom roughly. "You're mad! You made me think Cralley was dead! Do you think Cralley Gray is going to die? He couldn't, I tell you—he couldn't. You don't know him! Who's gone for the doctor?" He dashed some brandy upon his handkerchief and set it to the white lips.

"Mamie. She was here in the room with me when it happened."

"Happened! Happened!" he mocked her furiously. "'Happened' is a beautiful word!"

"God forgive me!" sobbed Mrs. Tanberry. "I was sitting in the library, and Mamie had just come from you, when we heard Mr. Carewe shout from the cupola room, 'Stand away from my daughter, Vanrevel, and take this like a dog!' Only that, and Mamie and I ran to the window, and we saw through the dusk a man in uniform leap back from Miss Betty—they were in the little open space near the hedge. He called out something and waved his hand, but the shot came at the same time, and he fell. Even then I was sure, in spite of what Mamie had said, I was as sure as Robert Carewe was, that it was you. He came and took one look—and saw—and then Nelson brought the horses and made him mount and go. Mamie ran for the doctor, and Betty and I carried Cralley in. It was hard work."

Miss Betty's hand had fallen from Cralley's breast where Tom's took its place. She rose steadily to her feet and pushed back the hair from her forehead, shivering convulsively as she looked down at the motionless figure on the sofa.

"Cralley!" said Tom, in the same angry, shaking voice. "Cralley, you've got to rouse yourself! This won't do; you've got to be a man! Cralley!" He was trying to force the brandy through the tightly clenched teeth. "Cralley!"

"Cralley?" whispered Miss Betty, leaning heavily on the back of a chair. "Cralley?" She looked at Mrs. Tanberry with vague interrogation, but Mrs. Tanberry did not understand.

"Cralley!" It was then that Cralley's eyelids fluttered and slowly opened and his wandering glance, dull at first, slowly grew clear and twinkling as it rested on the ashy, stricken face of his best friend.

"Tom," he said feebly, "it was worth the price to wear your clothes just once!"

And then at last Miss Betty saw and understood, for not the honest gentleman whom every one except Robert Carewe held in esteem and affection, not her father's enemy, Vanrevel, lay before her with the death wound in his breast for her sake, but that other, Cralley Gray, the ne'er-do-weel and light o' love—Cralley Gray, wit, poet and scapegrace, the well beloved town scamp.

He saw that she knew, and as his brightening eyes wandered up to her he smiled faintly. "Even a bad dog likes to have his day," he whispered.

(To be Continued)