

# The Two Vanrevels

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(CONTINUED.)

"I doubt if you've breakfasted, brother," Cralley responded aloud, rubbing the dog's head softly with the tip of his boot. "Will you share the meager fare of one who is a poet, should be a lawyer, but is about to become a soldier? Eh, but a corporal! Rise, my friend. Up and be in your own small self a whole corporal's guard! And if your corporal doesn't come home from the wars, perhaps you'll remember him kindly. Think?"

He made a vivacious gesture, the small animal sprang into the air, convoluted with gratitude and new love, while Cralley, laughing softly, led the way to the hotel. There, while he ate sparsely himself, he provided munificently for his new acquaintance and recommended him, with an accompaniment of silver, to the good offices of the Rouen House kitchen. After that out into the sunshine again he went with elastic step and a merry word and a laugh for every one he met. At the old English gardener's he bought four or five bouquets and carried them on a round of visits of farewell to as many old ladies who had been kind to him. This done, leaving his laughter and his flowers behind him, he went to Fanchon and spent part of the afternoon bringing forth cunning arguments cheerily to prove to her that General Taylor would be in the Mexican capital before the volunteers reached New Orleans and urging upon her his belief that they would all be back in Rouen before the summer was gone.

But Fanchon could only sob and whisper, "Hush, hush!" in the dim room where they sat, the windows darkened so that after he had gone he should not remember how red her eyes were and the purple depths under them and thus forget how pretty she had been at her best. After a time, finding that the more he tried to cheer her the more brokenly she wept, he grew silent, only stroking her head, while the summer sounds came in through the window, the mill whir of locusts, the small monotone of distant farm bells, the laughter of children in the street and the gay arias of a mocking bird swinging in the open window of the next house. So they sat together through the long, still afternoon of the last day.

No one in Rouen found that afternoon particularly enlivening. Even Mrs. Tanberry gave way to the common depression, and, once more her doctrine of cheerfulness relegated to the ghostly ranks of the purely theoretical, she bowed under the burden of her woe so far as to sing "Methought I Met a Damsel Fair" (her of the bursting sighs) at the piano. Whenever sadness lay upon her soul she had acquired the habit of resorting to this unhappy ballad; today she sang it four times. Mr. Carewe was not at home and had announced that, though he intended to honor the evening meal by his attendance, he should be away for the evening itself, as comment upon which statement Mrs. Tanberry had offered ambiguously the one word, "Amen." He was stung to no reply, and she had noted the circumstance as unusual and also that he had appeared to labor with the suppression of a keen excitement which made him anxious to escape from her sharp little eyes; an agitation for which she easily accounted when she recalled that he had seen Vanrevel on the previous evening. Mr. Carewe had kept his promise to preserve the peace, as he always kept it when the two met on neutral ground, but she had observed that his face showed a kind of hard leashed violence whenever he had been forced to breathe the air of the same room with his enemy, and that the thing grew on him.

Miss Betty exhibited not precisely a burning interest in the adventure of the damsel fair, wandering out of the room during the second rendition, wandering back again and once more away. She had moved about the house in this fashion since early morning, wearing what Mamie described as a "peaked look." White faced and restless, with distressed eyes, to which no sleep had come in the night, she could not read. She could no more than touch her harp. She could not sleep. She could not remain quiet for three minutes together. Often she sank into a chair with an air of languor and weariness, only to start immediately out of it and seek some other part of the house or to go and pace the garden. Here in the air heavy with roses and tremulous with June as she walked rapidly up and down late in the afternoon, at the time when the faraway farm bells were calling men from the

fields to supper, the climax of her restlessness came. That anguish and desperation, so old in her sex, the rebellion against the law that inaction must be her part, had fallen upon her for the first time. She came to an abrupt stop and struck her hands together despairingly and spoke aloud.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" "Ma'am?" asked a surprised voice just behind her.

She wheeled quickly about to behold a shock-headed urchin of ten in the path near the little clearing. He was ragged, tanned, dusty, neither shoes nor coat trammeling his independence, and he had evidently entered the garden through the gap in the hedge.

"I thought you spoke to me," he said inquiringly.

"I didn't see you," she returned.

"What is it?"

"You Miss Carewe?" he asked, but before she could answer he said reassuringly: "Why, of course you are! I remember you perfect, now I git the light on you, so speak. Don't you remember me?"

"No, I don't think I do."

"Lord!" he responded wonderingly.

"I was one of the boys with you on them boxes the night of you pa's fire!" Mingled with the surprise in his tone was a respectful unction which intimated how greatly he honored her father for having been the owner of so satisfactory a conflagration.

"Were you? Perhaps I'll remember you if you give me time."

But at this point the youth recalled the fact that he had an errand to discharge, and, assuming an expression of businesslike haste too pressing to permit further parley, sought in his pocket and produced a sealed envelope with which he advanced upon her.

"Here, there's an answer. He told me not to tell anybody who sent it, and not to give it to nobody on earth but you, and how to slip in through the hedge and try and find you in the garden when nobody was lookin', and he give a pencil for you to answer on the back of it, and a dollar."

Miss Betty took the note, glancing once over her shoulder at the house, but Mrs. Tanberry was still occupied with the maiden, and no one was in sight. She read the message hastily:

I have obeyed you and shall always. You have not sent for me. Perhaps that was because there was no time when you thought it safe. Perhaps you have still felt there would be a loss of dignity. Does that weigh with you against good-by? Tell me, if you can, that you have it in your heart to let me go without seeing you once more—without good-by—for the last time. Or was it untrue that you wrote me what you did? Was that dear letter but a little fairy dream of mine? Ah, will you see me again, this once—this once—let me look at you, let me talk with you, hear your voice? The last time!

There was no signature. Miss Betty quickly wrote a few lines upon the same sheet:

Yes—yes! I must see you—must talk with you before you go. Come at dusk. The garden—near the gap in the hedge. It will be safe for a little while. He will not be here.

She replaced the paper in its envelope, drew a line through her own



Carewe seized the missive.

name on the letter and wrote "Mr. Vanrevel" underneath.

"Do you know the gentleman who sent you?" she asked.

"No'm; but he'll be waitin' at his office, Gray & Vanrevel, on Main street, for the answer."

"Then hurry!" said Betty.

He needed no second bidding, but, with wings on his bare heels, made off through the gap in the hedge. At the corner of the street he encountered an adventure—a gentleman's legs and a heavy hand at the same time. The

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hand fell on his shoulder, arresting his scamper with a vicious jerk, and the boy was too awed to attempt an escape, for he knew his captor well by sight, although never before had he found himself so directly in the company of Rouen's richest citizen. The note dropped from the small trembling fingers, yet those fingers did not shake as did the man's when, like a flash, Carewe seized upon the missive with his disengaged hand and saw what two names were on the envelope.

"You were stealing, were you?" he cried savagely. "I saw you sneak through my hedge!"

"I didn't either!"

Mr. Carewe ground his teeth. "What were you doing there?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing!" mocked Carewe. "Nothing! You didn't carry this to the young lady in there and get her answer?"

"No, sir!" answered the captive earnestly. "Cross my heart I didn't. I found it!"

Slowly the corrugations of anger were leveled from the magnate's face, the white heat cooled, and the prisoner marveled to find himself in the presence of an urbane gentleman whose placidity made the scene of a moment ago appear some trick of distorted vision. And yet, curious to behold, Mr. Carewe's fingers shook even more violently than before as he released the boy's shoulder and gave him a friendly tap on the head, at the same time smiling benevolently.

"There, there," he said, bestowing a wink upon the youngster. "It's all right. It doesn't matter; only I think I see the chance of a jest in this. You wait while I read this little note, this message that you found!" He ended by winking again with the friendliest drollery.

He turned his back to the boy and opened the note, continuing to stand in that position while he read the two messages. It struck the messenger that after this there need be no great shame in his own lack of this much vaunted art of reading, since it took so famous a man as Mr. Carewe such length of time to peruse a little note. But perhaps the great gentleman was ill, for it appeared to the boy that he lurched several times, once so far that he would have gone over if he had not saved himself by a lucky stagger. And once, except for the fact that the face that had turned away had worn an expression of such genial humor, the boy would have believed that from it issued a sound like the gnashing of teeth.

But when it was turned to him again it bore the same amiable jocosity of mouth and eye, and nothing seemed to be the matter, except that those fingers still shook so wildly—too wildly, indeed—to restore the note to its envelope.

"There," said Mr. Carewe, "put it back, laddie; put it back yourself. Take it to the gentleman who sent you. I see he's even disguised his hand a trifle—ha, ha!—and I suppose he may not have expected the young lady to write his name quite so boldly on the envelope! What do you suppose?"

"I d'know," returned the boy. "I reckon I don't hardly understand."

"No, of course not," said Mr. Carewe, laughing rather madly. "Ha,

ha, ha! Of course you wouldn't. And how much did he give you?"

"Yay!" cried the other joyously.

"Didn't he go and hand me a dollar?"

"How much will you take not to tell him that I stopped you and read it? How much not to speak of me at all?"

"What?"

"It's a foolish kind of joke, nothing more. I'll give you \$5 never to tell any one that you saw me today."

"Don't shoot, colonel!" exclaimed the youth, with a riotous fling of bare feet in the air. "I'll come down!"

"You'll do it?"

"Five!" he shouted, dancing upon the boards. "Five! I'll cross my heart to die I never hear tell of you or ever knew they were such a man in the world!"

Carewe bent over him. "No! Say, 'God strike me dead and condemn me eternally to the everlasting flames of hell if I ever tell!'"

This entailed quick sobriety, though only benevolence was in the face above him. The jig step stopped, and the boy pondered, frightened.

"Have I got to say that?"

Mr. Carewe produced a bank bill about which the boy beheld a halo. Clearly this was his day. Heaven showed its approval of his conduct by an outpouring of imperishable riches. And yet the oath mislaid him. There was a savor of the demoniacal contract. Still that was to be borne and the plunge taken, for there fluttered the huge sum before his dazzled eyes. He took a deep breath. "God strike me dead," he began slowly, "if I ever—"

"No. 'And condemn me to the everlasting flames of hell!'"

"Have I got to?"

"Yes."

"'And condemn me to—the everlasting flames of—of hell if I ever tell!'"

He ran off, pale with the fear that he might grow up, take to drink and some day tell in his cups, but so resolved not to coquet with temptation that he went round a block to avoid the door of the Rouen House bar. Nevertheless the note was in his hand and the fortune in his pocket.

And Mr. Carewe was safe. He knew that the boy would never tell, and he knew another thing, for he had read the Journal, though it came no more to his house—he knew that Tom Vanrevel wore his uniform that evening and that, even in the dusk, the brass buttons on an officer's breast make a good mark for a gun steadied along the ledge of a window. As he entered the gates and went toward the house he glanced up at the window which overlooked his garden from the cupola.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

CRAILEY was not the only man in Rouen who had been saying to himself all day that each accustomed thing he did was done for the last time. Many of his comrades went about with "Farewell, old friend," in their hearts, not only for the people, but for the usual things of life and the actions of habit, now become unexpectedly dear and sweet to know or to perform. So Tom Vanrevel, relieved of his hot uniform, loose as to collar, wearing a big dressing gown and stretched in a chair, watched the sunset from the western

window of the dusty office, where he had dreamed through many sunsets in summers past, and now took his leave of this old habit of his in silence, with a long cigar, considering the chances largely against his ever seeing the sun go down behind the long wooden bridge at the foot of Main street again.

The ruins of the warehouses had been removed, and the river was laid clear to his sight. It ran between brown banks like a river of rubies, and at the wharf the small evening steamboat, ugly and grim enough to behold from near by, lay pink and lovely in that broad glow, tooting imminent departure, although an hour might elapse before it would back into the current.

The sun widened, clung briefly to the horizon and dropped behind the low hills beyond the bottom lands; the stream grew purple, then took on a luster of pearl as the stars came out, while rosy distances changed to misty blue; the chatter of the birds in the Main street maples became quieter and, through lessening little choruses of twittering, fell gradually to silence. And now the blue dusk crept on the town, and the corner drug store window lights threw mottled colors on the pavement. From the hall, outside the closed office door, came the sound of quick, light footsteps. It was Cra-



It was the vain Mamie.

ley going out, but Tom only sighed to himself and did not hail him. So these light footsteps of Cralley Gray echoed but a moment in the stairway and were heard no more.

A few moments later a tall figure, wrapped from neck to heels in a gray cloak, rapidly crossed the mottled lights and disappeared into Carewe street. This cloaked person wore on his head a soldier's cap, and Tom, not recognizing him surely, vaguely wondered why Tappingham Marsh chose to muffle himself so warmly on a June evening. He noted the quick, alert tread as unlike Marsh's usual gait, but no suspicion crossed his mind that the figure might be that of his partner.

(To be Continued)

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