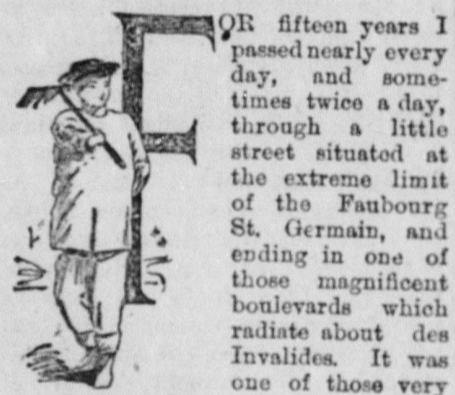


THE CROAKER.

When it ain't a-goin' to blow, I'll snow, I'll snow!

THE ABANDONED HOUSE.

BY FRANCOIS COPPEE.



FOR fifteen years I passed nearly every day, and sometimes twice a day, through a little street situated at the extreme limit of the Faubourg St. Germain, and ending in one of those magnificent boulevards which radiate about des Invalides.

The pavilion was inhabited. The garden, gay with flowers, always carefully attended to, was a proof of that.

One July night, a stifling night, under a dark, heavy sky, I came home about eleven o'clock, and, according to my usual habit, I mechanically turned my steps so as to pass before the mysterious pavilion.

I was in front of the pavilion, when some notes were struck on a piano within and echoed in the motionless air. I noticed with surprise that, doubtless because of the heat, two of the windows were partly open, though not enough for one to see the interior of the apartment.

"What do you think of this air?" I asked Prince Khaloff, a young Russian with whom I was very intimate. "I shall never forget it," I said warmly.

ly. I proceeded to sing it indifferently well. "Well," replied the young prince, "you can congratulate yourself, my dear sir, in having had such a rare treat. That melody is a song of the sailors of Drontheim, away out in Norway, and the beautiful voice must have been that of Stolberg, with whom we were all in love two years ago, when she made her debut in St. Petersburg—that Stolberg was the rival of her countrywoman Nilsson, and who would have become one of the greatest singers of the century if she had not been suddenly snatched from art, from the stage, from success of all kinds by her love for Count Basil Lobanof, at that time my comrade in the Guards, when we were both cornets in the cavalry.

"So," said I, "the wonderfully gifted artist has renounced everything for a little love affair." "Say rather for a great passion!" cried the prince. "Although very young, Stolberg had had numerous flirtations when she met Lobanof. I was there in the green room on the evening when Basil—who, I should tell you, is as handsome as a god—was presented to her, and I saw the diva pale with emotion, even under her powder and paint. Oh, it was startling, and I thought that she would carry off our young friend that same evening, pell-mell, with the triumphant bouquets, after the fifth act. But immediately he became as jealous as a Mussulman—yes, jealous as the very public when she sang. He was always there in the front seats of the orchestra, and at each burst of applause he turned abruptly, and cast a sombre look over the house.

The conversation turned to other things, and the next day I left Dieppe to go with some friends to Lower Normandy. I had only been there ten days when I read accidentally in a theatrical paper the following notice: "We announce with sorrow the death of Mlle. Ida Stolberg, the Swedish cantatrice, who shone so briefly and brilliantly on the stage in Germany and Russia, and who renounced her lyrical career in the midst of her success and has been living quietly in Paris for two years past. She died of pulmonary consumption."

I had never seen Stolberg. Once only had I heard that incomparable voice. Still, the reading of this commonplace notice, which announced to me the fulfilment of Prince Khaloff's dismal prophecy, broke my heart. I knew now the whole mystery of the closed house. It was there that the poor woman had languished and been extinguished, deeply in love, no doubt, but stifled also by the captivity to which she was condemned by the jealousy of her husband. No doubt, also, she was full of regrets for the former triumphs of her abandoned art. The fate of Stolberg seemed so sad to me that I fairly hated the man who had sacrificed her whole life. He seemed to me a fop, an egotist, a brute. I was certain that he would soon console himself for the loss of his wife, that he would soon forget the poor dead woman, and that, unworthy of the love which he had inspired, he would also be incapable of grief or fidelity.

On my return to Paris, one of the first persons I met on the Boulevard was Prince Khaloff. I told him how much I had been moved at the news of the singer's death, and I could not hide from him the instinctive antipathy which I felt toward Lobanof. "Behold, you people of imagination!" cried the prince. "You were charmed for an instant by this woman's voice, and you feel a posthumous love for her, and a retrospective jealousy of my poor friend. I own to you that I have always thought Basil a more sensual than sensible man; more passionate than tender; but I have seen him since poor Ida's death, and he is a prey, I assure you, to the most horrible and sincere despair. When I expressed my sympathy to him, he cast himself in my arms, and repeated to me, as he wept on my shoulder, that he could live no longer. And it was not pretence. He goes at once to Senegal, to join the Jackson mission, a party of explorers, who will bury themselves, probably forever, in frightful Africa. That is not common, you will own. It is to be feared that fever or cholera, or a shot from the gun of a savage, will end the poor boy's life and sorrows. Take

back, I beg you, your rash and premature judgment upon him. Besides, he had before his departure an idea which should certainly seem affecting to you. That pavilion, where he has been so happy and so unhappy, belongs to him. Well, he has closed it forever. Basil wishes that no living being should ever again penetrate that abode of love and sorrow. You can pass there now, and see the house fall into ruin, and on the day when they put a notice upon it, on that day you can say, 'Basil Lobanof is dead.'"

I left the prince, and the next day, reproaching myself for my injustice, I went to see the deserted house. The shutters were closed; the dead leaves of the great plane tree, half-bare (it was the end of autumn), covered the grass of the lawn. Weeds forced their way through the gravelled walk. The work of destruction had begun.

Months passed; a year; then another; then the daily papers were full of the great anxiety felt over the fate of Jackson and his companions, from whom no news had come. You know that even to-day the world is ignorant of the fate of those brave explorers. Living always in the same vicinity and passing every day before the abandoned pavilion, I say it decay, little by little. The rain of two winters had lashed constantly the plaster of the facade and covered it with a damp mould. Then the slate roof was damaged by wind and rain storms. Dampness attacked everything. Lizards sunned themselves on the wall; the balcony was loosened; the roof bent. The appearance of the poor house became lamentable. As for the garden, it had returned quickly to its savage state. The flowers were not cultivated; the rose-bushes were untrimmed, and had only leaves and branches; the geraniums were dead. The grass had long since disappeared under the dead hay, and the stalks of the weeds were discoloured even by the butterflies. Nothing grew there but thistles and the pale poppy. It was a gloomy spot!

Years rolled on. It was now impossible to hope for the return of the Jackson party. Evidently those intrepid pioneers had succumbed to hunger and thirst in some horrible desert or been massacred by the savages, and Count Basil Lobanof was dead with them, faithful to his Stolberg. The deserted house had fallen absolutely into ruins. The great tree which was near the house, and whose foliage was no longer kept in check by trimming, had thrust one of its immense branches through the window. The shutters had fallen off, and the tree had pushed its way into the interior of the dismembered house. There might be mushrooms within and even grass growing on the floor of the old ruin which had come to the last stages of decay, I thought, abandoning myself to a romantic reverie—"It is better that it should be so. If they had heard of the count's death, the heirs no doubt would have caused steps to be taken at once for its restoration. They would have broken it open brutally, and let in the garish light of day, to desecrate those hallowed associations of love and sorrow. Basil Lobanof has done well to disappear, and nature lovingly destroys slowly this old love-nest, and keeps it from profanation."

The other day I saw the ruin again; the branches of the great tree came through the roof, and there were little trees growing in the rocks. Then I met Prince Khaloff, who had not been in France for a dozen years. We walked and talked together, and I told him all about the abandoned house, its slow destruction, and the thoughts it suggested. The prince burst into laughter. "Decidedly, my dear fellow, you will never be anything but a poet. Basil is married again, the father of three children, and holds the office of First Secretary to the Russian Ambassador at Rome."

"The Count Lobanof is not dead!" I cried, stupefied. "On my last visit to Rome he was as well as you or I."

"He did not go with the Jackson party? Oh, the perfidious man!" I cried, furious at my wasted sympathy. "I should have suspected him. It seems that he forgot his dead love at once."

"Oh no," replied the prince. "Basil is not so guilty as that. Wild with grief after her death, he would, for good or bad go with the party, and he set out for Senegambia. But on the sixth day of their march he fell seriously ill and was taken to St. Louis by a caravan, in the greatest agony. There he recovered—but it was not his fault. His friends profited by his weakness and lack of energy to carry him back to Europe, and since then, after waiting a long time, he has consoled himself."

"But then the deserted house? What does that comedy signify?" asked I, in a bad humor. "How severe you are, my dear!" replied the amiable Russian. "It is not a comedy, but it proves on the contrary, that the count is a man of honor. What did he promise? That as long as he lived no one should go under the roof which had sheltered his love. And he has kept his word, though it has cost him a great deal. Besides, who knows if he does not always mourn his delightful singer, and regret bitterly the evenings passed in that closed house, listening to the divinely sad music of that voice which caused him so much happiness, so much sorrow? All that I can tell you," added the prince with an ironical smile, "is that with a large fortune, a beautiful family, and a home in the Eternal City, a despairing love twelve years old ought to be endurable!"—Translated for Romance.

Cloves grow wild in the Moluccas.



MULCHING. Mulching of strawberries to retard them is done by placing manure over the ground when it is frozen, and then scattering straw over it. Care must be taken that the manure does not cover the crowns of the plants. Leave the covering of straw on quite late in the spring. The manure can remain permanently.—New York World.

CREAM THAT WILL NOT MAKE BUTTER. It is often the case that the cream of the milk of a cow due to calve in two or three months will not make butter, but foams in the churn and rapidly becomes very sour. The milk of a cow undergoes a change about this time, and some cows are so affected that the cream will not yield any butter. Every cow should be dried off, if the milk does not stop naturally, two months before the calf is due. At any rate, good butter cannot be made from the milk so near calving. This condition of the milk, of course, is at once evident in a single cow, but doubtless there are cows in herds in the same condition, but are not detected. It shows how needful it is that a strict watch should be kept on each of the cows in a herd.—New York Times.

RYE A PASTURE CROP. I have been for twenty-five years that most of us in what is called "the West," did not sufficiently appreciate the value of a late fall and early spring pasture crop, writes E. D. Coburn in a New York Tribune. Where conditions are at all favorable it furnishes an astonishing quantity of rich, succulent grazing just at a time of year when it is most relished and most needed by all kinds of farm animals, even including poultry. It pieces out a great advantage other feed that is scant or poor, and while especially agreeable to all the stock, it makes poorly nourished cows practically double their milk in quantity annually. In fact, I have never seen a Kansas farmer so well fixed that a good piece of rye pasture wasn't a genuine bonanza to him. There has never been a season in all the central West when something of that sort wagone of comfort to its possessor that will likely be within the next six months. Hence I would say to every farmer who reads this, do not fail to sow, and sow early (in fact just as soon as the ground can be put in proper condition), a goodly area of rye for pasture. Don't sow it for grain, but for pasturage; make the most of it for grazing, and if eventually it also yields some grain worth harvesting, well and good. If you can't secure the seed readily, sow wheat just as you would rye; if it is not a plump high grade article, that will cut by a small figure if sown. If of small shrunk berry I would not sow less than five pecks to the acre; if plump a bushel and a half would be none too much; at all events, use plenty and don't be afraid of having too many acres. I haven't discovered anything that was a better regulator for the pigs, the colts, the calves, the cows or the old blind mare than a good bite of green rye or wheat. It is excellent in years of greatest abundance in years when other food is scarce or poor, it is simply indispensable—really a benefactor. Sow it with a drill or broadcast as you think best, but do a good job, as if you desired success and meant to deserve it.

COLIC IN HORSES. Irregular feeding in the matter of hours, long fasts and too great quantity given at long intervals are frequent causes of colic, says the New York World. Irregular work is not without its influence—a twenty-mile journey once a week is likely to be productive of more mischief than the same distance every day. A horse put to hard work at intervals cannot be kept in condition. Horses ought to be fed late at night and early in the morning; they should have at least two hours to consume and digest the morning feed before being taken out to work, and if not returned to the stable when the next feed is due, should be provided with nose bags. Changes of food should be introduced gradually. Horses may be fed with impunity on what will make them seriously ill if care is not taken to make the change gradually. Thus, green food, when it first comes in, and is young and succulent, often causes gripes, because fed too largely to the exclusion of the accustomed dry material. If a small quantity is cut with the hay chaff to begin with, the horse is less greedy about it when a larger quantity is allowed, and the digestive organs as gradually become accustomed to the change. Attention to the prevention of colic is much better than the possession of the accustoming dry material. If a small quantity is cut with the hay chaff to begin with, the horse is less greedy about it when a larger quantity is allowed, and the digestive organs as gradually become accustomed to the change. Attention to the prevention of colic is much better than the possession of the accustoming dry material. If a small quantity is cut with the hay chaff to begin with, the horse is less greedy about it when a larger quantity is allowed, and the digestive organs as gradually become accustomed to the change. Attention to the prevention of colic is much better than the possession of the accustoming dry material.

FEEDING APPLES TO COWS. There has long been a practical opinion among farmers that while sweet apples might be fed to cows with satisfactory results, sour apples were very injurious for them; but this opinion has been founded upon very slight actual knowledge of the real feeding value of apples. At the Vermont station apple pomace, ensilage, and used supplementary to and in part as a substitute for corn ensilage, was found to be relished by cows, and the results of four tests found it to be about equivalent in feeding value to corn ensilage. At the Massachusetts station Dr. Goessmann found apples to contain about eighty per cent of moisture, the apples having been gathered October 6th. The farther advanced apples are towards maturity the more sugar is found in them, and their value depends largely upon the amount of dry matter which they contain. Laboratory tests show that the feeding value of apples is somewhat higher than that of an equal weight of turnips. Apple pomace it said to be equal to sugar beets, it being a somewhat singular chemical fact that the pomace is richer in nitrogenous matter than the apple from which it has been produced, and the feeding value of pomace is assumed to be, pound for pound, one-third higher

Lockjaw From Chloroform. A Norwich (Conn.) blacksmith, acting under the advice of a local veterinary surgeon, chloroformed a refractory horse in order to shoe him. The horse yielded reluctantly to the influence of the anesthetic, but was finally brought completely under its power, and the shoeing process was accomplished with great ease. A few days later the horse began to droop, then was attacked with lockjaw and died in a very short time.—Chicago Herald.

A Giant Cattle Dealer. Will Brown, a young cattle dealer of Carter County, Kentucky, is only nineteen years of age, but measures six feet seven inches in height. His little brother, who is, however, the oldest but the smallest of the children, stands modestly at six feet two inches.—Atlanta Constitution.

Somebody's Good. To make our own troubles the means of helping the troubles of others is a noble effort for good. A well illustrated instance of this kindly sympathy is shown in a letter from Mr. Enoch L. Hanescom, School Agent, Marshfield, Me., an old Union Soldier. He says: "It may do somebody some good to state, I am a man of 60 and when 40 had a bad knee and rheumatism set in. I was lame three years and very bad most of the time. I got Dr. Jacobs' Oil and put it on three times and it made a cure. I am now in good health."

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