

THE SENATOR'S IDLE HOURS

CRANE'S CRIB ON THE SHORES OF THE ATLANTIC.

THE COMEDIAN'S HEALTH GREATLY IMPROVED DURING HIS SUMMER REST—“AMERICAN DRAMATISTS” WRESTLING BRAVELY BUT VAINLY WITH OLD NEPTUNE.

COHASSET, Mass., Aug. 29.—“Down the Jerusalem Road! See the houses of Crane, Robson, and Barrett! All aboard!”

This is the cry which greets one from the drivers of the “barges” at Nantasket Beach. A “barge” in this part of the country is not, as a New-Yorker would at first suppose, a double-decked boat, but a large, open stage, capable of seating from a dozen to two dozen people. Why it is called a “barge” nobody seems to know, but it is probably on the same principle that calls the big covered wagons of the West, in which whole families travel, “prairie schooners.” The barges travel over the Jerusalem Road all day long filled with sightseers, and the actors' colony here at Cohasset is the objective point of interest. “We seem to be the main attraction,” said Mrs. Crane to THE TIMES'S man to-day, “and the drivers make lots of money out of us during the Summer. They bring crowds down here every pleasant day, and it is really amusing to see them stop and point up to the house and single out Mr. Crane. You can almost hear them say, ‘That's the actor!’ and then the people stare at Will and make comments on his personal appearance. It's a free show, you see, and I don't know as you can blame people for wanting to see a real ‘live actor’ off the stage; but it's a great hindrance to our privacy all the same.”

You certainly cannot blame people for wanting to see “Senator” Crane's lovely seaside cottage, nor, for that matter, for wanting to see Mr. Crane himself; for he was never in better “form” than he is to-day. The genial comedian is not so stout, to be sure, as he was when he first presented “The Senator” in New-York; but he could afford to lose a good deal of the flesh which he then had. On the other hand, he is not so thin as he was last Spring, when he was really ill and his friends had begun to think very seriously of his condition and its possible results. When he came to Cohasset in June he was a very sick man, and for nearly two months was constantly under the eye of his doctor. For the last few weeks, however, he has picked up rapidly, and to-day he is the picture of health to the people who pass and repass his cottage at all hours of the day. His face is brown from exposure to the sun and the winds of the Atlantic. His step is light, and his appetite is of the best. Cohasset air and complete rest have done for him more than any medicine could have accomplished, and he is in excellent trim to begin his season's work next month.

The best feature of his improved condition is to be found in the fact that he realizes it thoroughly, and he tells a very funny story of the way in which it was forcibly borne in upon his mind that he was fast getting well. Within a little more than a stone's throw of his cottage is the shop of the village undertaker. “When I first came down here in June,” said Mr. Crane, stretching himself comfortably out in a large easy chair on his veranda, “I was pale and weak. The most polite man in town to me was that undertaker. He never met me without a smile full of cheery contentment. He always asked solicitously about my health, and was as affable toward me as a lawyer toward a rich client. About a month ago all this changed. He was polite still, but he became more distant in his greetings. He looked at me with that sad expression which betokens the man who has been disappointed. I saw at a glance what was the matter. ‘Ella,’ I said to Mrs. Crane, ‘I am getting well!’ And so I was. I never felt better in my life than I do to-day, and I feel better prepared to begin my season's work than I have felt for a long time. An undertaker's instinct never fails. It is safe to bet on every time, and I am betting on it.”

The new Crane's Crib—for the name of the little house which has disappeared has been transferred to the more pretentious edifice which is now the Mecca of the Nantasket pilgrims—is one of the cosiest and most delightful of the Summer residences to be found at Cohasset or anywhere along the Massachusetts coast. It stands on the same ground as the old one, though further back from the road and on a gently rising hill, the space in front having been filled in to form one of the prettiest sloping lawns imaginable. Across the road, embowered in trees, stands the mansion of Lawrence Barrett, now occupied by one of the dead actor's daughter's and her husband. On the same road, a little further toward the east, formerly stood the cottage of Stuart Robson; but after Mrs. Robson's death the actor refused to step within its doors again, and it was sold for a song, and moved away off into the town where Mr. Robson could not see it. He built an addition to the house of his daughter Alicia, and in this he spends the little time which he now passes in Cohasset. Crane is the only actor of prominence who now spends his entire Summer at Cohasset, and, naturally, his is the house which strangers go to see and out of which the “barge” drivers reap their Summer harvest.

The new “cottage”—it would be called a house anywhere else—is two stories high, and built in the Colonial style—a style which seems to cover anything that is quaint and original in Massachusetts. In general configuration it is almost square, but it has so many odd nooks and corners and bay windows and balconies cropping out in every direction that it is difficult to describe it in any regular form. A wide veranda or piazza—Mrs. Crane calls it a “perch”—extends along two sides, one fronting the water way which makes up from the ocean near Minot's Ledge Light and the other the road leading to Nantasket, and on this, of course, the time passed at the cottage is principally spent. There are easy chairs and rockers and willow seats enough on this veranda to accommodate a “barge” load of people, but it is needless to say that the barge never unload their sightseers at the Crib. The house is painted in terra cotta, with cream white trimmings, and, covered as it is with innumerable awnings, the effect as one approaches it from the road or from the ocean is remarkably picturesque.

Inside, the arrangements and furnishings are such as might be imagined in the home of an actor of refined ideas and a wife of exquisite taste. The large parlor is a model of beauty, both in design and furniture. It extends the entire length of the house, is entered by large doors opening almost directly from the veranda, and at the upper end a big open fireplace of pressed brick and shining tiles, with its large logs of wood ready for the match, suggests a wealth of comfort in Winter or on a chilly night in Summer when the vigorous northeaster is churning the ocean into foam without. On either side of this are two cosy nooks, furnished with pillows and cushions, on which to read or dream away the lazy hours. A long “settee”—a New-England luxury—on which two people may easily stretch themselves, occupies one of the sides of the room, a piano stands in one corner, and plush chairs are to be found everywhere. It is a room to enjoy thoroughly when the weather makes out-of-door life unpleasant.

Sitting room, dining room, and bedrooms above are all designed with the same leading idea of comfort above all things. From Mr. and Mrs. Crane's room on the second floor an open balcony extends, fronting the water, and this, as well as the porch, and every room in the house, is lighted by electric lamps. The effect when the whole “Crib” is illuminated is simply gorgeous. Here Mr. and Mrs. Crane spend their time drinking in pure draughts of the ocean air, and entertaining the few select friends who are fortunate enough to enjoy their esteem. If excitement is wanted a drive of four miles brings them to Nantasket Beach, where there is plenty of life and bustle, and where Joseph Brooks, Mr. Crane's manager, occupies a cottage with Mrs. Brooks and the children, which is always open to receive them.

“Senator” Crane himself, however, is too great a lover of the sea to spend all his time in even so delightful a place as “Crane's Crib.” He has a sloop, in which he goes fishing—and marvelous tales are told of his wrestlings with the mighty cod—and a steam yacht, the Tantalus, in which he breasts the waves of old ocean whenever he can induce anybody to take a cruise with him. The Tantalus is a stanch little steamer, capable of battling with any ordinary sea, and Mr. Crane apparently thinks that his first duty to his guests is to get them aboard and treat them to a sail along the coast. He is an admirable commander and a magnificent provider, and few who have ever accepted the hospitality of the Senator will be likely to forget it. Some, and especially the authors who are writing plays for the Senator, will remember the little steamer with sorrow to the end of their days. An “American dramatist” wrestling with the avenging angels of old Neptune is not a dignified spectacle, but most of the “American dramatists” who are writing for Mr. Crane have furnished that spectacle along the Massachusetts coast, and the stories of their woes have become part of the legendary history of Cohasset and Nantasket.

Nearly all the authors whose names are familiar to New-York playgoers have been visitors to “Crane's Crib” at some time during the summer, and it has seemed right to the “Senator” to entertain all of them on the Tantalus. With ladies Mr. Crane is very thoughtful, and he never even suggests a cruise to them unless the water is smooth and the wind in a direction

to insure quiet sailing. But with men it is different. He cannot understand that they are not all sailors, and his first proposal on their arrival is to take a cruise in the yacht, if the weather is in the least degree suitable. Probably he would not insist on braving an old-fashioned northeaster in the Tantalus, but anything short of that would not move him to pity. Clay M. Green, Augustus Thomas, Henry Guy Carleton, and several others have tasted the sweets and the bitters of a life on the ocean wave aboard the Tantalus, but Clinton M. Stuart's experience was perhaps the roughest of the lot, and will bear repeating as an example of the “Senator's” passion for the water.

Stuart had been writing a play for Mr. Crane, the scenario of which had been accepted, and after completing the piece the author, in an evil hour, set forth for Cohasset to read it to the comedian and his manager, Mr. Brooks. Mr. Crane proposed at once that they should board the Tantalus and go round to Nantasket by water, instead of driving over to Brooks's cottage, which could have been done in half an hour. Stuart is not a good sailor, and his heart quaked as he listened to the distant roar of the ocean, brought to the “Crib” by a fairly strong east wind; but he was too proud to expose his weakness, and the yacht was boarded. As she steamed out into the open sea she rolled and pitched tremendously. This was fun for Crane, but death to the perturbed author. The comedian was so engrossed with his duties as master of the Tantalus that he probably never noticed the sickly hue that overspread the playwright's face. Stuart held on to the railing for a time, and finally staggered down into the cabin, the closeness of which made his suffering worse than ever; but he could lie down here without being drenched to the skin, and here he remained until the little yacht came to anchor off Nantasket. Poor Stuart, fancying that the worst was over, staggered to the deck, only to find that the landing place was still far off and had to be made in a rowboat. Tenderly they helped him into the boat, and, clinging wildly with both hands to the gunwales, he was rowed to the shore. He was sick and dizzy, and as he arose to land he reeled, toppled over, and took an involuntary bath. They fished him out of the water amid the shrieks of laughter of hundreds on the beach and consolatory words from the “Senator.” But the play was not read that day nor the next. It took Stuart two days to get his “land legs” on, and then he was driven to Nantasket, read his work, and it was accepted.

The “Senator,” Mrs. Crane, and Pete, the little black-and-tan, who is their constant companion, have but a few more days of Summer rest at Cohasset. Mr. Crane's season will open in Providence, R. I., Sept. 14, and “The Senator” will then be revived. This play will be presented until New-York is reached, in January, when Mr. Crane will appear in a new American comedy, the name of which has not yet been selected.