

CROKER IN ENGLAND.

HOW THE TAMMANY "BOSS" LIVES AT HIS WANTAGE HOME.

Wantage, Berkshire, January 24.

In the little village of Letcombe, which is about one and a half miles southwest of Wantage, Berks, stands the Moat House, the English residence of Richard Croker. As one enters the village a turn to the right reveals the iron gates which mark the entrance and through which, at the end of a short drive, the house appears, while at the back one gets a distant view of the stables, surmounted by a large weathercock formed of a jockey on a horse, and the paddocks. The house itself stands on a site which is supposed to have been occupied by a royal hunting lodge so far back as the reign of King John, but all traces of antiquity have vanished, and the house as it now stands is only redeemed from the commonplace by the moat which surrounds it, and which carries the mind back at once to tales of the knights of old and their deeds of valor.

When Mr. Croker took the house, some five or six years ago, its dimensions were considerably less than they are now, for nearly all the back part of the house, which is built of red brick, is new, only the front presenting the same appearance architecturally that it did in former years, although even this part has been redecorated. The two towers have also been restored, and there is a pretty veranda in front and a large conservatory on the left hand side. The grounds are neither extensive nor picturesque, and do not give one the idea that they are in any way under the personal supervision of the owner. The interior of the house is decorated in excellent taste, but it in no way gives an impression of great wealth or magnificence. The dining room is panelled with oak, while in the drawing room is an electric piano, which can at any time be switched on from Mr. Croker's bedroom, so that if sleep refuses to be wooed by him he can soothe his feelings by the strains of music. There is also a fine billiard room, and table, on which the champion himself has tried his hand, but since the days when Sibary and Morton, the latter of whom at one time trained for Mr. Croker, lived with the "Boss" at the Moat House, the billiard table has not been much in requisition, as Mr. Croker is so much alone there.

In England, at any rate, Mr. Croker is pre-eminently a sportsman, and so it is only natural that the stables should form a very important feature at the Moat House. There is room in them for forty horses, the one row of stalls being cage boxes, while on the other side are the separate stalls, all being lighted by electric light. Here and there one of Mr. Croker's celebrated bulldogs is to be seen wandering about, while pigeons perch on the roof, and the cawing of the rooks in the big trees which surround the house is to be heard from time to time. Mr. Stanley, who breaks in all Mr. Croker's colts, is supreme here, and many are the good racers he sends on to Newmarket to receive their final training. On the downs above Letcombe is the stud farm, and here at the present time are some splendid colts, which are no doubt destined to do great things at some future time. Cornwall, the stud groom, is devoted to his colts, and thinks no trouble too great to render them fit and well when their time comes to leave him. One of these colts was brought up entirely by hand, and was a source of great interest to the "Boss" during the early months of last year.

When Mr. Croker, soon after his arrival here, found that his horses did not do so well as he expected under the English trainer, he sent over to the States for Wishard, an American trainer. All Wantage remembers how Wishard and Duke (who have since dissolved partnership), together with little "Johnny" Reiff and a number of colored men who were to look after the horses, arrived at The Bear, the little old fashioned hotel in the town, preparatory to settling down in the district. Then, all at once, arrangements were altered, and it was decided that all Mr. Croker's horses should be sent to Newmarket. Rumor says that this was owing to the jealousy of the English trainers, and rumor is not always wrong. There was some idea lately of bringing the horses again near Letcombe to a place called Seven Barrows, but Wishard did not approve of this step. Mr. Croker's fortunes on the English turf have not so far been brilliant, but this has not deterred him, for he has now commissioned Lester Reiff to buy the three best horses in the States for him, regardless of price, and the celebrated Harold is one of his recent purchases, for \$1,100, so he deserves better luck in the new country. American Innaha, Manhattan Boy and Rhoda B. are some of his best known horses, while at the stud farm good old Dobbins, the American champion, still flourishes, and is handing down some of his sterling qualities to his descendants.

Mr. Croker himself is not often at Letcombe, and when he is nobody is much the wiser in the village, for no man could lead a quieter life than he does there. He comes over for rest and quiet, and, though enterprising journalists do their best to deprive him of this, he almost invariably refuses to see them. It is no uncommon thing for half a dozen to come in one week, but the "Boss" will not see them, and refuses to be drawn. There are, indeed, few things on this side to remind him of Tammany, save the tiger's head with open mouth and teeth showing (the well known badge), and the menu cards of Tammany banquets, which are to be seen in the rooms, together with the baskets

which at one time contained lovely exotics and were placed in his cabin by admiring friends. He forms no acquaintances in the place, goes to nobody's house, and he is never to be seen walking in the village. Indeed, I greatly doubt whether many people around are aware of the I may almost say "dual" personality of the owner of the Moat House.

Almost every Sunday when he is at Letcombe Mr. Croker drives over to Hendred in the morning to attend service at the Roman Catholic Church there, a distance of some six or seven miles, while in the afternoon he is usually to be seen among his equine friends. He sometimes has week-end parties at the Moat House, but at other times he is usually alone there. Mrs. Croker has seldom been over in recent years, but the "Boss" is sometimes accompanied by his sons. Last year Mr. Croker had the misfortune to break his leg, and since then he has done little or no riding, but he is fond of driving. He will drive a good horse, and he goes down some of the steep Berkshire hills at a furious pace, slashing vigorously with his whip all the time. A good horse with him

CROKER IN NEW-YORK.

A NEW "HISTORY OF TAMMANY HALL" GIVES SOME INTERESTING GLIMPSSES OF THE "BOSS'S" CHARACTER.

The owner of Wantage receives considerable notice in a "History of Tammany Hall," by Gustavus Myers, which has just been published. The book gives a detailed record of the organization, showing it in its true light. The nature of the book and the dread of Tammany's ill will may be judged from the preface, in which the author says: "The difficulties of securing the publication of this work by any of the regular publishing houses proved insurmountable." Some houses considered it "inadvisable to publish the volume. Others did not feel warranted in 'locking horns with Tammany,' and several returned the manuscript without comment. The author finally published the book with the aid of a 'publication fund,' to which many public spirited citizens contributed.

since about 1888 has remained the absolute boss of both the society and the organization.

Then the author gives these points in Croker's career:

Mr. Croker was born near Cork, Ireland, November 24, 1824. His father was a blacksmith, who emigrated to America in 1846, and settled in a squatter's shanty in what is now the upper portion of Central Park. From his thirteenth to his nineteenth year young Croker worked as a machinist. At a very early age he distinguished himself in the semi-social fist fights which were a part of the life of the "gang" to which he belonged. He became, tradition has it, the leader of the "Fourth Avenue Tunnel Gang," and fought a number of formal prize-fights, in which he came out victor.

At the beginning of the Tweed regime, according to his testimony before the Fassett Committee, he was an attendant under Judge Barnard and other judges in the Supreme Court. Upon leaving that place, for some reason not known, he served as an engineer on a Fire Department steamer. In 1868 and '69 he was elected an Alderman. In 1873 he was elected Coroner. In 1876 he was re-elected Coroner; in 1881 he ran for Alderman, with the understanding that, if elected, Mayor Edson would appoint him a Fire Commissioner. Mayor Edson did appoint him, and he was reappointed by Mayor



A WEEK-END PARTY AT THE MOAT HOUSE.

means a fast trotter, and if one he buys fails to please him it may be sold for what it will fetch. Local tradesmen speak well of the "Boss," for if he can employ them he invariably does, and if they give satisfaction they may be sure of his future patronage, and, indeed, if a man can supply a good thing at a price a cut below other men Croker will always deal with him. To the local charities he is a good friend, and to application for such a cause is ever made in vain to him, although all this sort of business is discharged by Mr. Usher, his confidential man, by whom all the checks are signed "Usher, Joint Account."

Life at the Moat House must, indeed, be a great contrast to life in New-York, for Mr. Croker keeps only a comparatively small establishment. Indeed, his surroundings are much the same as those of any wealthy middle class English gentleman, but they by no means betray the millionaire. He never interferes in or troubles about English politics, nor does he ever mention his American position while in this neighborhood. His great physical strength has been proved on many occasions, but never more than when on one occasion he lifted a seven-foot flywheel on to the crank shaft of a dynamo, without any assistance, a performance which is usually accomplished by two or three men.

While living his free and untrammelled life in England, Mr. Croker is able to gratify his extraordinary love for animals. He had at the Moat House three good bulldogs, one French bulldog, with a litter of puppies, several prize cats and five St. Bernard dogs. Two bulldogs—Rodney Stone, the champion of the world, and Bromley Crib—he took back to America last time he went.

A NEW WORLD TO CONQUER.

From The Washington Star.

"Won't it be splendid when we can talk to the people on Mars?" exclaimed Mr. Meekton's wife.

Mr. Meekton roused himself from his semi-doz and exclaimed:

"What's the matter, Henrietta! You haven't got all through with the people of this earth, have you?"

Croker's name appears in the book for the first time in connection with his action concerning the Huckleberry charter of 1870, the object of which was to abolish the State commissions governing the city. Then the author recalls the fight which took place between the two Tammany leaders, John Kelly and John Morrissey, over the appointment, at Kelly's request, of Croker to be a marshal. Mayor Havemeyer wrote: "When Croker's appointment was announced I was overwhelmed with a torrent of indignation."

In a public letter addressed to Kelly Mayor Havemeyer charged that the former while Sheriff had obtained \$84,482 by fraudulent and illegal receipts, adding this further characterization: "I think you are worse than Tweed, except that he was a larger operator. The public knew that Tweed was a bold, reckless man, making no pretensions to purity. You, on the contrary, were always avowing your honesty and wrapped yourself in the mantle of piety. Men who go about with the prefix 'honest' to their names are often rogues."

Kelly sued the Mayor for libel on account of this letter arising out of the Croker appointment, but on the day the suit was to come to trial Mr. Havemeyer fell dead of apoplexy.

The author then passes on to the time when Patrick H. McCann testified that Croker came to his store in 1884 with a bag containing \$180,000, which he said was to be used in obtaining Aldermanic votes to secure the confirmation, in case of his appointment, of Hugh J. Grant as Public Works Commissioner.

An interesting chapter is the one entitled "The Dictatorship of Richard Croker." In this Mr. Myers says:

Upon the death of Kelly the twenty-four leaders of the Assembly districts, comprising the Executive Committee of Tammany Hall, announced individually that there would be no further "boss," and that the organization would be ruled thenceforth by a committee of twenty-four. However, cliques immediately arose, and soon four leaders—Richard Croker, who had been a sort of deputy boss under Kelly; Hugh J. Grant, Thomas F. Gilroy and W. Bourke Cockran—arranged a junta for administering the organization's affairs. By securing the support of seventeen of the twenty-four leaders, Croker began concentrating power in his own hands, and

Hewitt. In 1885 he caused the nomination of Grant for Sheriff.

Mr. Croker's testimony, according to Mr. McCann's testimony, gave \$25,000 in five presents of \$5,000 each to Mr. Croker's two-year-old daughter Flossie. Neither Mr. Croker nor Mr. Grant denied this transaction, though both declared the sum was \$10,000, and not \$25,000. Mr. Grant furthermore declared that he gave it in consideration of Flossie being his godchild.

As "boss," Croker became a power in New-York. The author of the "History of Tammany Hall" says of him:

From being a comparatively poor man, as he testified in 1890, he became suddenly rich. From April, 1889, to February, 1890, he was City Chamberlain, at a salary of \$25,000 a year, but since then has held no public office. Within two years, however, he was able, according to common report, to buy an interest in the Belle Meade stock farm for \$250,000, paying additionally \$100,000 for Longstreet and other race-horses. Later he built a new house, said to cost over \$200,000, and lavishly spent money, and displayed evidences of wealth in other ways.

Mr. Myers says that Croker's three years' racing experience in England cost him between \$600,000 and \$700,000. He tells of Croker's nomination of Van Wyck against the wishes of the party, and concerning his action after the election says:

Now that Tammany was re-established in almost absolute power, Croker set about choosing the important city officials to be appointed by the Mayor. He frankly admitted before the Mazet Committee, in 1890, that practically all of them were selected by him, or his immediate associates. Requiring a routine assistant in the work of "bossing," he selected John F. Carroll, who thereupon resigned the office of Clerk of the Court of General Sessions, which yielded, it was estimated, about \$12,000 a year, to take a post with no apparent salary. Mr. Croker then returned to horseracing in England.

The little book is not aimed against Croker or any other man, but speaks of the present "Boss" only as he contributed toward the history of the society. "The records show," says the author in the preface, "that nearly every prominent Tammany leader has been involved in some theft or swindle, public or private. These peculations or frauds range, in point of time, from 1799 and 1805-'06 to the present day."