

THE HOME CIRCLE

Summer Hymn.

The year draws near 'ts golden-hearted prime,
Fulfilled of grandeur, rounded into grace;
We seem to hear sweet notes of joyance chime
From elfin throats through many a greenwood
place.

The sovereign summer, robed and garlanded,
Looks, steeped in verdure, up the enchanted
skies;
A crown, sun-woven, round her royal head,
And love's warm languor in her dreamy eyes.

We quaff our fill of beauty, peace, delight;
But 'mid the entrancing scene a still voice
saith:

"If earth, heaven's shadow, shows a face so bright,
What of God's summer past the straits of
death?"

—Paul Hamilton Hayne.

The Big Rock.*

A genuine rock it is and as rocky a rock as you ever saw. It looks as if it had been split unevenly from its ancient setting and flint bullets fired into it. And ever since creation the forces of nature have seemingly been arrayed against it: the rain has dashed upon it; the hail has pounded it; the frost has bitten it; the winds have scoured it; the sun's furnace has baked it; the constant river has gnawed at its base;—yet as the only signs of incessant war its surface is pitted as by small pox and scarred as by sword-cuts.

But it is a big rock only in name. It is not large enough for a house-seat; in fact, ten steps would carry you across it. It is not high enough to insure against the freshets; for eight or nine feet downward would bring you to the river-level. Above it towers a stone neighbor in the hill point just beyond the river. Only boy-high is its cliff-face and porch-wide is the bench beside it jutting out into the stream. There are but three or four lesser rocks that lift their heads above water in obeisance. A hundred yards westward the river comes into view laughing over a shoal; a hundred yards eastward it curves gracefully out of sight. By it ran the public road and directly across it lay the foot-path. A miniature sand-ridge connects it with the junction of branch and river. Humble indeed is its station, tree-shaded, shrub-fringed, and mainly moss-covered, lying in obscurity at the depth of the valley.

And yet while the cliff across the way is higher and the boulder up the hollow is larger and the Rock-House at the old mill place is more imposing, this alone is the Big Rock in name and in association.

Work time.

The sun broiling, the air still, the corn-field grassy, the plow and the hoe getting heavier and heavier, every muscle weary and every pore active—how welcome the mid-morning and mid-afternoon rest-time! Then out of the near-by acres to the old Big Rock: and right down flat a-back on the moss, or seated on the bluff edge, or thrusting bare feet in the crystal water and splashing up rainbows!

Restful Big Rock!

Showery afternoon.

Breezeless and sultry the morning; cloud-capped the old Granfather; at noon the "thunder-heads" come up in the western sky.

"It is going to rain!" shouts one farm boy gleefully to another as they return to work.

Three o'clock, and the shower marches across hill and valley, to weary boys more musical than Sousa's band, and so heavy that mountains right by you are hidden from view.

"The ground is too wet to work." So we are free for to-day!

The rived is reddened. Out then with fish-roles and out with writhing worms and off to the Big Rock! Then fish and fish and fish. Sometimes a wriggling eel, a big-mouthed cat-fish, or a "horney-head," and sometimes—never a bite! But such is fishing, and happy were the patient, aspiring fishermen.

Sportful Big Rock!

Rainy season.

From east or south come the clouds and keep coming day after day from the "rain country" of

the Atlantic or the Gulf. Down comes the rain shower after shower, or day-long and night-long. Dripping the trees and sobbing the earth and frantic the streamlets. And the river colors and swells and surges, rising higher and higher till it overleaps its banks and rushes madly down the valley.

Away now to the Big Rock and see the river-demon foaming. The edge of a fertile field torn off up-valley and mingling in the waters; rails snatched from fences; oat-bundles, corn-stalks, and new-mown hay; logs stolen from the saw-mill yard; water-gates and foot-logs; uprooted bushes and trees; chunks and dead branches innumerable;—all being devoured and borne onward by the freshet. Andy ou can see it all from the serene, immovable Big Rock!

Spectacular Big Rock!

10 p. m.

The debate at the Academy is over, it is 10 o'clock, and the last half-mile homeward must be traveled alone. No moon in the heavens, and the star-shine is too feeble to penetrate the deeper valleys. Dark was the road around the bend of the river by the overshadowing hill; it was enough to make a boyish heart beat faster—for who could tell but that right here he might meet a murderous robber, a prowling mad dog, a cannibal bear, or a deathful ghost? If only he can reach the Big Rock, he is safe!

Alas, just as swift-walking feet touch the rock there is a snarl in the bushes by the foot-way. It is a hungry opossum on his night-search for food, and absolutely no harm is meant or possible. But never mind: a little quicker step would not hurt, then a little faster and still faster till after a dead run the home gate is entered, shut, and latched. Then, halt: and the stars twinkle down a mischievous smile, and the river ripples with laughter!

Scary Big Rock!

Saturday afternoon.

The work of the week is over and preparations for the Sabbath are in order. Off then to the Big Rock, and off with sweaty, dust-inwrought apparel, and head foremost in the sun-warmed river! Swimming forward, backward, and aside; diving downward for sand and forward for distance; floating on the surface or sinking flat on the bottom; racing with, "ducking," or having splash-battles with comrades; chasing melons or apples in current and eddy; treading in the water or measuring its depth, descending full length with up-stretched hand; and finally soaping and scrubbing and plunging and emerging as clean as Naaman from Jordan!

Cleansing Big Rock!

But, alas, the former glory of the Big Rock is gone. There is now barely enough sand and dirt in its hollows and crevices to support a bit of Japan clover, a bunch of poison oak, and a few shrubs of sycamore, black willow, poplar, and the like. Its old-time mantle of earth has been torn aside by its assailants, and now it lies here on the left bank of the river naked to sunlight and storm. The big ants and the lizards crawl over it unmolested. The old spruce which shaded it has died and its decaying form is the temporary tombstone of a past that is gone forever. The road has forsaken it and fled to the hillside edging the valley. The Big Branch has leaped from its alder-lined bed and now unhindered it saucily gores the side of the Big Rock before it joins the river a few yards below. The river itself, formerly deep and dignified, used to pass slowly by and always in a beautiful eddy made a deferential bow to the Big Rock, but now it has sacrificed depth for swiftness, and so hurries almost irreverently by. No beaten path leads to it, weeds have taken the place of trees, and things are not as they were.

Things are not as they were; but whatever they are, they were. And so—thank God for the Big Rock!

HIGHT C. MOORE.

Raleigh, N. C.

The Most Useful Usefulness.

It is not easy for a young woman to decide what sort of accomplishments and possessions will be really useful to her in life. For example, the ability to work out a problem in algebra, skill in playing accompaniments on the piano, a knowledge of cooking, an appreciation of great poetry, may dispute with one another for place in her education.

When it comes to her choice of things, who shall help her settle the claims of a set of Shakespeare as against a new gown, or a good photo-

graph of the Sistine Madonna as against a dictionary, or a piano as compared with a summer at an expensive seaside hotel?

The young woman may well address herself to distinguishing the really useful from the really useless in life. Whatever makes her days and those of her family richer and fuller is useful. If the piano makes attractive the center of the home life in winter evenings it is worth ten times the joys of a summer hotel. If a love for Wordsworth's sonnets comes into her life to allay perplexity over the adapting of household expense to income, Wordsworth is more "useful" even than more money would be. The enlarged income might again be reduced, but the deep sense would remain of Wordsworth's truthfulness when he wrote:

The world is too much with us.

It may at first sight seem a paradox, but it is nevertheless true that of all the useful navings of a woman, the most useful is an ideal.—Youth's Companion.

Economy and Luxuries.

Economy may be hard to practice, but for most persons it is a necessity. It is foolish to live beyond one's income. It is also sinful. We are defrauding others when we spend that which we do not earn, or cannot pay back. Luxuries are desirable, but they can be dispensed with. The fine house, the gay equipage, the rich dainties, the fine apparel and the generous living have their place where the ample purse warrants the expenditure, but they are most reprehensible when they are procured at the sacrifice of character and at the expense of others. Extravagant living is one of the crying sins of the day. Americans, generally, live too fast, and run too much in debt. Sooner or later he who spends more money than he makes pays the penalty in broken furniture, in ruined reputation, in wrecked life and in family disaster.—The Presbyterian.

Moral: Never Gamble.

The story of the catch wager is an old one, but never so much so that it does not bear repeating. You may have forgotten it.

Two men wagered that one could not answer "yes" to three questions the other man would ask. The money is up; they're off.

First: "If you were driving along a lonely road in a forest full of wild animals, snakes, etc., and met a child walking to town, and she would ask you to let her ride, would you refuse the request?"

"Yes."

Second: "Suppose you fell heir to a million dollars, and a poor starving woman asked you for ten cents to buy bread to keep her from dying, would you refuse to give the ten cents?"

"Yes."

Third: "If I lose this bet, will you pay it?"

"Yes."

"All right, then, that equals horse and horse. Give me two tens for a five, and we will be square."

Willing to Pay for his Contempt.

The following anecdote is told of Gen. Gilman Marston, a once famous New Hampshire lawyer, says the Boston Herald.

General Marston was attending court at Dover, when a young attorney made a motion that was denied by the court. The young man remonstrated against what he thought was the wrong ruling of the judge. So vehemently did he remonstrate that he was fined \$10 for contempt of court. An older attorney took the matter up, and he was fined a similar sum. Still another, who thought he stood a little better with the judge, endeavored to straighten the matter out, but he too, enriched the coffers of the State by paying a "ten spot" for contempt.

General Marston was then seen to rise in his seat and advance to the clerk's desk. Taking his long pocketbook from his pocket he took out two \$10 bills and laid them on the desk.

"What is that for," asked the court.

"I want you to distinctly understand," said the general, "that I have just twice as much contempt for this blankety court as any man here, and I am paying for it."

The life that has not known and accepted sorrow is strangely crude and untaught. It can neither help nor teach, for it has never learned. The life that has spurned the lesson of sorrow, or failed to read it aright, is cold and hard; but the life that has been disciplined by sorrow is courageous and full of gentle and holy love.—Anna Robertson Brown.

*This is the third in a series of "Home-acre Sketches" which Mr. Moore is writing for THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER. The former articles were entitled "The Big Poplar" and "The Graveyard Hill." Others will follow at irregular intervals.