

# THE POET OF A RACE

Several months ago The Commoner printed in the "Home Department" a little poem which had appeared previously in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and was credited to Inez Z. Parker. The little poem attracted considerable attention and The Commoner received several letters of inquiry concerning the author. Diligent inquiry failed to reveal any news of her and the search was about to be abandoned when a letter was received from Dr. J. W. McClure, of Sedalia, Mo., who knew nothing of the inquiries being made but thought, and rightly, that The Commoner would be interested in knowing something of the young poet.

Miss Inez C. Parker lives at Rolla, Mo., and is a young negro girl who is among the very few of her race who have been able to put down upon paper the rhythm and the rhyme that is seemingly a natural attribute of the negro character. She has met with all the discouragements that seem fated to meet one of her race in an effort to get away from the mere humdrum of existence, but she has persevered, and by perseverance and sheer ability has scored many triumphs. Her poems are meeting with more favor every day, and slowly but surely the circle of those who admire her literary efforts is growing wider. With rare good sense she has avoided the mistake so often made by aspiring writers and has not gone beyond her depth in an effort to do "fine writing." She has confined her efforts to the homely little things that lie about her, and in this fact lies the chief charm of her verses. Her own hopes and aspirations are to be seen in the pathetic incidents of which she so often writes, and the wellspring of her native humor shines out even though her environment may seem to hold her back. In "Watermelon Time, Goodbye" the reader has a glimpse of this saving grace of humor, and of the inherent traits which ever peep forth, no matter how hard the writer may try to disguise them:

Roses all done faded lack a dream,  
Butterflies mos' gone away;  
Pharo' locusts scrape dey squeaky  
fiddles  
All de sunny, lonesome day.  
Birds don' sing no mo' among de  
trees,  
Yellow haze is in de sky;  
Out in de meadows de goldin-rod's in  
bloom—  
Watermillion time good-bye!

Plump Bob White is a whis'lin in de  
fiel's,  
Rustly grass is dry an' brown;  
An' de win' goes throo de yellow corn  
Whisp'rin wid a mo'nful soun';  
Busy spiders spin dey silver threads  
Way up in de air so high;  
Squirr'ls begin to chatter in de  
woods—  
Watermillion time, good-bye!

Chryschantums nod dey frizzle heads  
A dancin' in de breezes chill;  
Keen win's brings de news dat ole  
Jack Fros'  
Is a waitin' jest behind de hill;  
Trees begin to shiver an' to mou'n,  
Yellow leaves begin to fly;  
Sun sets 'way aroun' towards de  
south—  
Watermillion time, good-bye!

"Fiddle Tune Pictures" is another delightful bit of verse, for in it one sees the inherent happy-go-lucky characteristics of the race, mixed with the emotional that always appeals to the heart, no matter in what breast it may beat:

Ought to hear dat lil' ol' fiddle,  
Gran'pap's had it years an' years,

An' sometimes when he is playin'  
Why, his eyes git's dim wid tears;  
Den ag'in, while it's a ringin',  
You kin hear him softly singin',  
Den sometimes he'll kinder smile  
Whils' he play, all de while.  
All its tunes is full o' pictures,  
An' it's somehow got de power  
To show ev'rything it sing 'bout—  
Ev'ry tree, ev'ry flower,  
All de honey bees a-hummin',  
All de sweet ol' banjo's thummin',  
All de cabins gleamin' white  
In de dusk, in de light.  
Now de mo'kin' bird is singin'  
In de early blesh of morn,  
An' de summer wind is whisp'rin',  
While it dance wid de corn,  
Now aroun' de cabin eave  
Hear de night win' sigh an' grieve  
Lak a sperrit lost an' lone.  
How it sigh! How it moan!  
Now de big white moon is shinin'  
An' de darkies 'gin to sing,  
'Cross de snowy fiel's of cotton  
You kin hear dey voices ring.  
Singin' high an' laffin' higher  
Whils de stars is flashin' fire;  
An' de honeysuckles white  
Th'ows perfume on de night.

This is but a portion of the often rollicking, often pathetic, little poem, but enough is given to show the clever word painting of this talented young verse writer.

Miss Parker does not deserve praise because of her race, nor because of her environment—she deserves it because her work gives a promise of something much better in the not distant future. She has much to overcome, it is true, because of the conditions which surround her, but even with this handicap she is making the most gratifying progress in her literary efforts, and she is constantly adding new friends who will help her because she is deserving of their help.

### THE ROCKEFELLER FORTUNE

John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil dividends for the year will amount to \$20,000,000, and his income from all sources for 1905 is estimated at \$40,000,000.

That sum is not the Rockefeller fortune, bear in mind, but the accretions of a single year. "Frenzied finance" would capitalize such an income for a par value of a billion dollars.

Rockefeller might spend and give away \$40,000,000 in a single year, and be no poorer at the end of the year than at its beginning. He doesn't spend 1 per cent of it, and in all his years of giving he has never gotten rid of as much as he is taking in this year. The money is simply piling up, adding to the vast hoard and increasing the enormous power of one man.

Taxes levied in the state of Minnesota for a year amount to \$20,000,000. This sum supports the state government, all the state institutions, all county government, all of our cities with their special assessments, supports all our schools, and pays the expenses of townships and road work. The Rockefeller income is twice the income of this great state. Minnesota has the greatest permanent school fund of any state in the union, now over \$16,000,000. Rockefeller could supply two such endowments out of his annual income, and still have \$8,000,000 for pm money.

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luxury such as no one dreamed of fifty years ago. The income for a single day, over \$100,000, would be a welcome endowment for many a small college.

Every hour adds to the Rockefeller fortune a sum almost equal to a congressman's annual salary. He receives in fifteen minutes from the money that is working for him, as

much as most skilled mechanics earn in a year of toil.

Regardless of where and how he got it, the fact stands that he has it, and that the increment from his hoard is large enough to be a menace to legitimate industry and commerce. It is great enough to threaten the subversion of free institutions.—Minneapolis Journal.



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