

the intervening space and the consequent drive prove not objectionable. Nevertheless, the need of a hotel on the spot is severely felt, and to the eye of a casual observer the chances for making a good thing out of it appear to be great.

Comparatively few people are acquainted with the Springs, although the fame of their healing properties has gone abroad over the land. Of course every one who comes here goes to see them, but I will take the risk of boring the readers of THE CRITIC by giving a description of the Springs and their surroundings. All who have been there can skip the following paragraph, unless they are curious to see if the description tallies with their idea of the place.

Approaching from the road one sees a very fine grove of trees, growing taller than others in the vicinity, a fact which immediately impresses the visitor with the idea that the mineral properties of the waters must at least agree with the trees, and as there is such a close connection between vegetable and animal nutrition and healthfulness, that it naturally follows that human beings would prove stronger for partaking also of the substances that Mother Earth in this place allows to go into solution in the waters for the benefit of her children. The grove is composed largely of hemlocks and pines, with a number of yellow birches interspersed. The odor of these resinous trees is most refreshing, and as one turns in at the gate and feels the restful springiness of the carpet of pine and hemlock needles beneath the feet, a drowsy, dreamy feeling steals over one's senses, and Roberts' lines on his fir trees at "Kingscroft" come back to the mind as not inappropriate to the "murmuring pines and the hemlocks" around and above:

"The wash of endless waves is in their tops,
Endlessly swaying, and the long winds stream
Athwart them from the far off shores of dream.
Thro' the stirred branches filtering, faintly drops
Mythic dream-dust of Isle, and palm, and cave,
Coral and sapphire, realms of rose, that seem
More radiant than ever earthly gleam
Revealed of fairy mead and haunted wave.

A cloud of gold, a cleft of blue profound—
These are my gates of wonder, surged about
By tumult of tossed bough and rocking crest,
The vision lures. The spirit spurns her bound,
Spreads her imprisoned wing and drifts from out
This green and humming gloom that wraps my rest."

Having begun it, I was tempted to finish the sonnet, which, as it is not, to my knowledge, included in any of the author's volumes, may not come amiss to the lovers of poetry who have not before seen it.

To return to the Springs, whither I was wending my way when I stopped to quote our poet. Down a gentle slope from the road, still under the tall trees, we come upon them. The soil is not wet in the vicinity, only in the three springs themselves do we find the water ever welling up and flowing off in a stream. The principal spring, from which the water is most extensively drawn, has lost all its poetry by being dug out to a depth of six or eight feet, built up with brick and covered over with a wooden top. This disappoints the romantic, who will have to console themselves with the thought that utility is necessary, and meanwhile take their delight in the other springs, which are in a natural state, and very fascinating to behold. One of these other springs has, I confess, some very unsightly boards over part of it, but the third fully comes up to one's idea of sylvan beauty. It is simply a clear pool, not very large, with all the grasses and ferns natural to the vicinity peeping over the margin, Narcissus-like, to see how fair they look in the water. The waters of the three springs differ in their qualities to some extent, but the middle spring, which is built over, appears to be the best for general use. From the one with the boards over it people take mud to make plasters for various ailments. It is said this mud is a sure cure for corns.

You can go and drink all the water you can hold, without money and without price. The pump in the middle spring is kept going pretty steadily, and there is always a glass there for the convenience of visitors. Horses are particularly fond of the water, and are frequently driven down to get a drink of it. As far as the taste of the water is concerned, no one need have any tremors about partaking for the first time. It does not remind you of old boot soup at all, as most mineral water does, but is of a pleasant flavor, and cold as winter. A great liking for it is soon developed, and every time the visitor goes to the Springs the pump will be put in motion for his benefit. All this is very well, you will say, but you don't see where the money comes in for the genial owner, Captain Hall. Well, the baths do it. There is a bath house containing three baths and a furnace and boiler for heating the water, where for twenty-five cents a bath in as much hot, cold or tepid water as you desire, and a shower, may be had at any time of day. A morning or an afternoon can be most pleasantly dissipated by taking a warm bath, then either take a shower or let the cold tap run until you are safe not to take cold, and wrap up well after and recline in a hammock with some light reading for an hour or two. The sensation is most delightful, and the world looks a brighter place under such circumstances. A glass of the Royal Belfast Ginger Ale, which is made from Spa water in the bottling establishment just across the way from the Springs, is not to be despised after a bath, and the convenience of the bathing public is well looked after in this respect.

The grounds are also fitted up for picnics; swings, hammocks, a croquet lawn, a dancing platform and tables and seats making it a perfect place for picnicing.

My letter has grown to undue proportions, and as I intend giving in the Industrial Notes column next week a description of the bottling establishment of the Spa Springs Company, I must perforce pass over, or leave until a future time, the many other attractions of Middleton and its surroundings.

C. F.

PARSONS

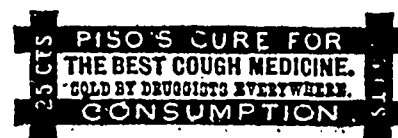


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