

Talks with Women.

BY JENNY JUNE.

THE AFTER-MATH.

THE second or "Indian" summer is so commonly known as to be little thought of in this country, particularly as it cannot be depended upon for duration. Still, it has been a theme with American poets and novelists, and it is a feature of the year that has a great attraction for the dwellers in lands where the summer beauty is cut off sharp as with a knife, and lingers not, much less returns for another hand-shake, a parting word, a loving embrace, an opportunity to fling out from its liberal arm, more of its golden fruitage; its sweet and welcome abundance.

But our second summer cannot always be depended on for a stay. Sometimes it merely throws out a few rays of sunshine—a cobwebby net of mist—fine lace, behind which it roguishly hides and peeps—breaking forth in effulgence for one tantalizing moment, to retire in affright at the hurried approach of its grim father, winter. But there are years, some of which we can all remember, when the summer returned, as if loth to leave the earth she had beautified, and even remained until grass grew for autumn mowing, and fruits ripened a second time, and this was called the "After-math." We can all of us remember some royal summer that departed, and returned in this way—some specially beautiful season—when snow-flakes fell on still blooming flowers and the fallen leaves which violent winds had not yet dried or swept away. We can remember the curious blending of summer radiance with the gray chill of approaching winter, and how precious these days became in passing as well as in retrospect.

But there is more than one kind of after-math—of second summer, and let us see how nearly every process in nature corresponds to our human experience, and how we can put the gentle influence of the "after-glow" into our own lives.

It is pretty well understood now, that there is no such thing as luck; that nothing exists or develops itself by growth, or otherwise, without a cause. You cannot make three in mathematics out of nothing. You can make it out of two and one, or three ones, but you must have the units in some form or other. Just so is it with all the good and evil that exists; back of that good or evil lies the cause or condition of its being—carelessness, indulgence, ignorance, bad parentage, or ancestry on the one hand, honesty, industry, steadfastness, loyalty, truth, self-respect, good blood, and healthy, wholesome living on the other. These lay the foundations of one or the other, and there is no accident or want of certainty about the outgrowth; it is simply the product of the seed that has been sown, the cultivation, or lack of it, in its progress towards maturity.

It is only children, or the very ignorant, who will now declare that they do not know "how" such and such a result came about, and expect you to believe that it was by some occult agency that could not be controlled. If china is broken, or a dish spoiled in the cooking, if a thief takes advantage of an open window, or a horse escapes by the forgotten door, the cause is simple and not far to find; yet there are still ignorant and superstitious persons, who will endeavor to shield themselves by placing such occurrences on mysterious or supernatural grounds, and expect a false declaration to release them from responsibility. This effort to shift obligation, and resort to deception to escape the penalties of a fault, is not to be put down altogether to the discredit of those who resort to it. It is partly the result of our habit of disregarding natural laws, and supposing that supernatural agencies can, would, or should control or inter-

fere with their working. All the experience of our lives teaches us that these are fixed, and their results inevitable. Fire burns always; water runs always. Whatever has weight falls down, not up, always; and so on. You cannot plant a plum-tree and get apples, nor a pear-tree and get grapes; nor can you plant disease and get health.

It is remarkable, however, that men and women who understand exactly what is required to produce good crops of corn, wheat, and fruits—who know how carefully the breed has to be selected, housed, kept, and reared, to produce a high race of animals, should give hardly a thought to these subjects in connection with the much more important race of human beings, or the influences of bad conditions, as they affect the morals, the health, and the happiness of individuals. When these things are thought of, the wisest among us do not begin at the fountain-head with the improvement of the individual, but with the creation of new and strange conditions, with which his habits and degree of intelligence have nothing in common. Ignorance, dirt, and squalor may be put into clean houses, and taught to draw and play the piano, but it will be dirt and squalor still; the work must begin with the individual, and it must be principally executed by the individual, or it will not be genuine; there is no such thing as growing, or changing, or grafting on qualities for another. We may discover those that were latent, but we cannot create them; they must have previously existed in the heart or mind if they are brought out.

For example, to return to the original figure of the after-math. Suppose an artist should endeavor to paint its beauties on the premature frost and deserted features of a blighted and disappointing season, would he succeed in creating even a shadow of the reality; no, indeed. He would only excite wonder at the sublimity of his vanity or his stupidity. The after-math must be the natural outgrowth, the after-glow of the summer itself; a perfunctory performance—an effort to produce a semblance of it without the reality would only expose the witless individual who attempted it to ridicule.

Yet, we constantly do this very thing. We preach one thing and practice another, and expect the results—the outgrowth—to come from our talking instead of our doing. There are mothers who expect to scold children into gentleness, and fathers who lay down laws for the family every one of which they break themselves; there are daughters who weep over tales of abstract goodness, while allowing tired and over-worked mothers to die in their service; and there are sons and brothers who recognize no tie, no duty, save those which bind them to their own selfish instincts, who still demand the recognition of every claim and obligation on the part of others. The age is materially strong, but ethically weak, because the virtues grow best in shady places, and shrink from the glaring light and the showman's art of parade, which is now exercised alike upon patent medicine, religion, and philanthropy. From the planting of words, we look for a harvest of good deeds; and are surprised because we do not get it; but ought we to expect it? An ounce of example is worth a pound of precept. says the old saw, and it is as wise and true to-day as ever. Talk simply breeds talk, not work; it is the example of a worker, and a knowledge of his method which inspires others with a desire to accomplish something in the same direction.

Doubtless, words have value, as the honest expression of ideas, as affording a means of presenting a subject, or making a statement clear to the mind of another; but they are worthless, and worse than worthless, when they are made to stand in the place of the real thing, and instead of being used to mirror an object, are falsely set up as the object itself. Out of shallow and wordy pretenses, we cannot make a life

that will mellow and grow into richer beauty with age. One by one its thinly veneered and merely glittering surfaces drop away leaving the poverty of the reality exposed to view. All this we constantly see, and for all these results a thousand reasons are given, a thousand specious excuses made; but they rarely mean any thing, or contain a grain of the real truth, which is always, that good foundations were not well laid, that the best seed was not properly sown or wisely cultivated—that the life itself, just as the season, the tree, or the grain, contains all the elements of its own success or failure—of its own beauty or deformity—of its own splendid fruition and beneficent influence; or its disappointing deformity, and failure to realize the hopes that were built upon it.

The seasons we cannot control; we can only accept them—we can be thankful for the good and gladness they bring, and make the best of their occasional short-comings; but our lives are partly within our own power, we can at least cultivate them as we would trees in a nursery; we can repress tendencies to evil, and encourage the growth toward the good. Above all things we can set ourselves to the performance of our own duty instead of exhausting time and strength in a critical outlook for the faults and short-comings of others. Because when the season, or the day, or the life is ending it does not matter to it how last season, or yesterday, or some other life terminated; the interest for this year, for the work to be done, and the existence that is vanishing from our sight, centers in this one; and what a glorious thing it is, when the sunset glory reflects only the serenity of a perfect past, an existence wherein all duties have been royally done, a radiance which has gathered into itself all the strength and sweetness, all the labor and achievement, all the growth and ripened excellence that has accrued from high purpose and conscientious endeavor. Longfellow wrote—

*“Oh what a glory doth this world put on
For him who with a fervent heart goes forth
Under the bright and glorious sky, and looks
On duties well performed and days well spent.”*

The after-math of such a life is rich in every blessing; in love, honor, the respect of the good, and the peace which is the halo of age. Oh, life! how beautiful it is when strength and every natural gift is put to best uses; when acts are prayers, that serve as the wings to our best thoughts, our truest aspirations.

But we must not mistake the aim of life which is to bring us such fruition, nor work for the semblance of the thing instead of the thing itself. Life, a true, good, noble life, is just as possible to one as to another, so far as circumstance, place, and condition are concerned. We can be true to ourselves if we are sufficient to ourselves. Emerson's greatness began at thirty, when a brief experience had taught him that there was nothing in the contact with crowds, in the mere acquisition of money, in simply working for popularity; that could compensate him for the loss of himself to himself; and his work is the evidence of what the loss would have been to others. It is not so great in quantity, he did not spread it over space for bread and butter, or that he might live in a fine house; but it is absolute, every thought is like an atom of creation itself; it is fitly embodied, and contains a germ of the whole. When Emerson retired from the world, not as a monk, or a hermit, but to be a good neighbor, a good citizen, a faithful friend, a tender husband, and a true liver of the philosophy which he put into his writings, he became a king. He lifted himself above the world that he did not feel was necessary to him, and that he knew he could help apart from its turmoil; better, and more truly than if hampered by its vanities, and distressed by its turbulence. Some must live in the glare, but they are to be pitied;

do not count them among the fortunate ones, for the exposure is not conducive to happiness, and does not always end in honor. What is it that is most valuable to us? what is it that leads to permanent tranquillity, and that sunset brightness we all must desire to anticipate. The cultivation of gentleness, of toleration, of freedom, and largeness,—the recognition of the relations which exist between ourselves and the rest of the world; and also of the entirety of every human existence, as separate and distinct from the world, and its right to that existence in its own way, provided that way is not hurtful to others.

Imagine a life that is true to itself, that is honest and independent, yet kindly and considerate towards all, and everything that differs from itself, and you will see how rare it is. It does not ask the opinions of others in regard to what it shall say or do; it has its own and lives them. It does not depend on any self constituted authority for its taste, or imbibe prejudices which have no reason to support them because they find expression in foolish speech. It is a calm, wise life, which thinks its own thoughts, solves its own problems, exercises its own faculties, fulfils its own obligations, is severe only to its own short-comings.

Do we any of us know of many such lives? Yet there is not necessarily anything extraordinary in them. Such a life may be lived by a shoe maker, a mason, a carpenter, a farmer, a dress-maker, a school-teacher, a busy wife, and mother of children, or almost any worker; the only almost insurmountable obstacle would present itself to the woman of society and fashion, fenced about with false ideals, with traditions that are time-honored and respected, and conventionalities which are supposed to form the foundation of our whole social superstructure. Still the real woman will put some true life even into the driest of bones. She will bring pleasant and strengthening life with her wherever she goes; in her presence masks fall and truth is not obliged to hide its head. She sees the good in things, and it naturally finds its way to her, and surrounds her like an atmosphere. She passes through the fiery furnace of society unscathed, for she knows and believes only in the bright side which it has shown to her, and she carries with her all pleasant and sunny memories, to make the later loveliness of her days, which have not been spent without yielding their precious influence upon the lives of others. The fairest woman I ever saw was the queen of a brilliant assemblage gathered in her own home. Her social position was a high one, she had many duties in connection with her husband's public office and rank, yet no one spoke of her beauty or her wealth, or her position, but every one of her devotion as a mother or her admirable qualities as wife, of her faithfulness as friend, of her truth as a woman. Her glorious after-math had begun, but it grew out of the qualities which belonged to herself, and which might be common to us all, not from adventitious circumstances.

The Nondescript.

She is in her fifteenth or sixteenth year, too old to be treated as a child, not yet advanced to the dignity of the title of “a young lady” and bitterly resenting that of “a miss,” under which name she buys her gloves and shoes. Often she is a thorough student of the mathematics, languages, and music; oftener, we fear, only a giddy school-girl, with her mind running on dress and beaux.

She holds no position in society and a very insignificant one in the family circle. Her big brother twits her on her round shoulders and awkward gait; her elder sisters com-