



"AFTER THE RAIN."

AFTER THE RAIN.

BY ARTHUR L. SALMON.

The sunset on the water's breast
Is casting down its mellowed light;
The clouds are floating into rest,
Before the night.

Now that the storm has passed away,
A parable of nature lies
On path and field, for those who say
That they are wise.

Beside the placid mere I stand,
And watch the rainbow's wondrous stain;
A fragrance from the moistened land
Gives thanks for rain.

A twitter from unnumbered birds
That haunt the tangled flowery ways—
What is it but the simple words
Of love and praise?

We thank our father for the light
In which his tenderness appears,
For sunny joys—forgetting quite
To thank for tears;

Forgetting that his testament
Is written on the rainy skies—
That blessed comforters are sent
For tearful eyes;

Forgetting he that goes in tears
To sow upon a field of pain,
Shall come when harvest-season nears
To gather grain.

—Good Words.

THE WAKING SOUL.

BY JULIE M. LIPPMANN.

Larry lay under the trees upon the soft, green grass, with his hat tilted far forward over his eyes and his grimy hands clasped together beneath his head, wishing with all his might first one thing and then another, but always that it was not so warm.

When the children had gone to school in the morning they had seen Larry's ragged figure, as they passed along the street, stretched out full length beneath the trees near the gutter curbstone, and when they returned, there he was still. They looked at him with curiosity; and some of the boys even paused beside him and bent over to see if he were sunstruck.

He let them talk about him and discuss him and wonder at him as they would, never stirring, and scarcely daring to breathe, lest they be induced to stay and question him. He wanted to be alone.

He wanted to lie lazily under the trees and watch the sunbeams as they flirted with the leaves, and hear the birds gossip with one another, and feel the breeze as it touched his hot temples and soothed him with its soft caresses.

Across the street, upon some one's fence-rail, climbed a honeysuckle vine, and every now and then Larry caught a whiff of a faint perfume as the breeze flitted by.

He wished the breeze would carry heavier loads of it and come oftener. It was tantalizing to get just one breath and no more in this way.

But then, that was always the case with Larry. He seemed to get a hint of so many things and no more than that of any. Often when he was lying as he was now, under green trees, beneath blue skies, he would see the most beautiful pictures before his eyes. Sometimes they were the clouds that drew them for him, and sometimes the trees. He would, perhaps, be feeling particularly forlorn and tired and would fling himself down to rest and then, in a moment (just for all the world as though the skies were sorry for him and wanted to help him forget his troubles), he would see the white drifts overhead shift and change and there would be the vision of a magnificent man—larger and more beautiful than any mortal—and then Larry would hold his breath in ecstasy, while the man's face grew graver and darker, and his strong arm seemed to lift and beckon to something from afar, and then from out a great stack of clouds would break one milk-white one which, when Larry looked closer, would prove to be a colossal steed; and in an instant, in the most remarkable way, the form of the man would be mounted upon the back of the courser and they would be speeding off toward the West.

And then Larry would lose sight of them—just at the very moment when he would have given worlds to see more; for by this time the skies would have grown black, perhaps, and down would come the rain in perfect torrents, sending Larry to his feet and scuttling off into somebody's area-way for shelter. And there he would crouch and think about his vision, fancying to himself his great warrior doing battle with the sea; the sea lashing up its wave-horses till they rose high upon their haunches, their gray backs curving outward, their foamy manes a-quiver, their white fore-legs madly pawing the air, till, with a wild whinny, they would plunge headlong upon the beach to be pierced by the thousand rain-arrows the cloud god sent swirling down from above and sink backward faint and trembling to be overtaken and trampled out of sight by the next frenzied column behind.

Oh! it sent Larry's blood tingling through his veins to see it all so plainly, and he did not feel the chill of his wet rags about him nor the clutch of hunger in his poor empty stomach when the Spirit of the Storm rode out, before his very eyes, to wage his mighty war.

And then at other times it would all be quite different, and he would see the figures of beautiful maidens in gossamer garments, and they would seem to be at play, flinging flecks of sunlight this way

and that, or winding and unwinding their flaky veils to fling them saucily across the face of the sun.

But none of all these wondrous visions lasted. They remained long enough to wake in Larry's heart a great longing for more, and then they would disappear and he would be all the lonelier for the lack of them.

This was the greatest of his discouragements. What would he care for heat or cold or hunger or thirst if he could only capture these fleeting pictures once for all, so that he could always gaze at them and dream over them and make them his forever.

That was one of the things for which he was wishing as he lay under the trees that summer day. He was thinking:

"If there were only some way of getting them down from there. It seems to me I'd do anything in the world to be able to get them down from there. I"—

"No you wouldn't," said a low voice next his ear—"no you wouldn't. You'd lie here and wish and wonder all day long, but you wouldn't take the first step to bring your pictures down from Heaven."

For a moment Larry was so mightily surprised that he found himself quite at a loss for words, for there was no one near to be seen who could possibly have addressed him; but presently he gained voice to say:

"Oh, I know I couldn't get 'em, o' course. Folks can't reach up and bring clouds down out o' de sky."

"I didn't say anything about clouds nor about the sky," returned the voice. "I was speaking about pictures and Heaven. Folks can reach up and bring pictures down out of Heaven. It's done every day. Geniuses do it."

"Who's geniuses?" asked untaught Larry.

"People who can get near enough Heaven to catch glimpses of its wonderful beauty and paint it on canvas or carve it in marble for the world to see, or who hear snatches of its music and set them upon paper for the world to hear; and they are called artists and sculptors and composers and poets."

"What takes 'em up to Heaven?" queried Larry.

"Inspiration," answered the voice. "I don't know o' that. I never seen it," the boy returned. "Is it Death?"

"No; it is life. But you wouldn't understand if I could explain it, which I cannot. No one understands it. But it is there just the same. You have it, but you do not know how to use it yet. You never will unless you do something besides lie beneath the trees and dream. Why can't you do something?"

"Oh, I'm tired with all the things I'm not doin'," said Larry in his petulant, whimsical way.

For a little the voice was silent, and Larry was beginning to fear it had fled and deserted him like all the rest when it spoke again in its low-toned murmur—like the breath of a breeze—and said:

"It is cruel to make a good wish and then leave it to wander about the world, weak and struggling; always trying to be fulfilled and never succeeding because it is not given strength enough. It makes a nameless want in the world, and people's hearts ache for it and long to be satisfied. They somehow feel there is somewhere a blessing that might be blessed; a beauty that should be more beautiful. It is then that the little unfledged wish is near and they feel its longing to be made complete; to be given wings and power to rise to Heaven. Yes; one ought not to make a good wish and let it go (not to perish, for nothing is lost in this world), but to be unfulfilled forever. One ought to strengthen it day by day until it changes from a wish to an endeavor, and then, day by day, from an endeavor to an achievement, and then the world is better for it and glad of it, and its record goes above."

"If all the people who wish to do wonderful things did them, how blessed it would be. If all the people who wish to be good were good, ah, then there would be no more disappointment, no tears nor heartache in the world!"

Larry pondered an instant after the voice had ceased, and then said, slowly:

"I kind o' think I know what you mean. You think I'd ought to be workin'. But what cud I do? There ain't nothin' I cud be doin'."

"Didn't I hear you complain of me a little while ago, because I did not carry heavy enough loads of honeysuckle scent and did not come often enough? I carried all I was able to bear, for I am not very strong nowadays, and I came as often as I could. In fact, I did my best the first thing that came to hand. I want you to do the same. That is duty. I don't bear malice toward you because you were dissatisfied with me. You did not know. If you tried to do the best you could and people complained, you ought not to let their discontent discourage you. I brought you a whiff of perfume; you can bring some one a sincere effort. By-and-by, when I am stronger and can blow good gales and send the great ships safely into port, and waft to land the fragrant smell of their spicy cargo, you may be doing some greater work and giving the world something it has been waiting for."

"The world don't wait for things," said Larry. "It goes right on. It doesn't care. I'm hungry and ragged, and I haven't no place to sleep; but the world ain't a-waitin' fer me ter get things ter eat ner clo'es ter me back, ner a soft bed. It ain't a-waitin' fer nothin' as I can see."

"It does not stand still," replied the voice; "but it is waiting, nevertheless. If you are expecting a dear, dear person—your mother, for instance—"

"I ain't got no mother," interrupted Larry, with a sorrowful sigh; "she died."

"Well, then—your sister," suggested the voice.

"I ain't got no sister. I ain't got nobody. I'm all by meself," insisted the boy.

"Then suppose, for years and years, you have been dreaming of a friend who is to fill your world with beauty as no one else could do; who among all others in the world will be the only one who could show you how fair life is. While you would not stand still and do nothing what time you were watching for her coming, you would be always waiting for her, and when she was there you would be glad. That is how the world feels about its geniuses—those whom it needs to make it more wonderful and great. It is waiting for you. Don't disappoint it. It would make you sad unto death if the friend of whom you had dreamed should not come at last, would it not?"

Larry nodded his head in assent.

"Does it always know 'em?" he asked. "I mean does the world always be sure when the person comes it's the one it dreamed of? Mebbe I'd be dreamin' of some one who was beautiful and mebbe the real one wouldn't look like what I thought, and I'd let her go by."

(To be Continued.)