

THE HOME CIRCLE.

THE SUMMONS.

I think the leaf would sooner  
Be the first to break away  
Than to hang alone in the orchard  
In the bleak, November day,  
And I think the fate of the flower,  
That falls in the midst of bloom,  
Is sweeter than if it lingered  
To die in the autumn's gloom.

Some glowing golden morning,  
In the heart of summer time,  
As I stand in the perfect vigor  
And strength of my youth's glad prime,  
When my heart is light and happy,  
And the world seems bright to me,  
I would like to drop from this earth-life  
As a green leaf drops from the tree.

Some day, when the golden glory,  
Of June is over the earth,  
And the birds are singing together  
In a wild, mad strain of mirth,  
When the skies are as clear and cloudless  
As the skies of June can be,  
I would like to have the summons  
Sent down from God to me.

I would not wait for the furrows,  
For the faded eyes and hair,  
But pass out, swift and sudden,  
Ere I grow heart-sick with care.  
I would break, some morn, in my singing,  
Or fall in my springing walk,  
As a full-blown flower will sometimes  
Drop all abloom from the stalk.

So, in my youth's glad morning,  
While the summer walks abroad,  
I would like to hear the summons  
That must come, sometime, from God;  
I would pass from earth's perfection  
To the endless June above,  
From the fullness of living and loving  
To the noon of immortal love.

ARMSTRONG.

In the early days of California—the olden days of gold, or the golden days of old, as you please—in a certain miners' camp, on the Yuba river, there lived a queer genius named Armstrong. He was an honest miner, not differing materially from his fellows, except that he had a curious habit of speaking to himself. For the simple reason that he departed from the common custom in this one particular he was, of course, voted crazy by the other miners. To call persons "crazy" who do not follow the customs of the majority, is a constant habit with men. But, day after day, Armstrong worked away with his pick and shovel, earning nothing for the remarks of the neighbors, and seeming to wish for no other partner in his toils or his rest save the invisible personage whom he always addressed in the second person singular, and with whom he was almost constantly in close conversation. The common drift of his talk, while at work, would be about as follows:

"Rather tough work, Armstrong—rich dirt—grab a dollar a pound—no time to waste—pitch in, sir—banged if I don't wish I was in the States. This mining's mighty hard work. Nonsense, Armstrong; what a fool you are to be talking in that way; with three ounces a day right under your feet, and nothing to do but just to dig it out."

His conversation would be duly punctuated with strokes of the pick and lifts of the loaded shovel. And so the days would pass along, and Armstrong worked, and slept, and with his invisible partner. Well, it happened in due course of time, that the class of human vampires, commonly called gamblers, made their appearance at the camp where Armstrong worked. As he was not above following the example of his fellows, he paid the new comers a visit. It is the same old story. After watching the game awhile, he concluded it was the simplest thing in the world. So he tried his luck and won—a hundred dollars! Now, any new experience would always set Armstrong to thinking and talking to himself worse than ever. It was so this time. "Now, Armstrong," he said, as he hesitated about going to work next morning, "that is the easiest hundred dollars you ever made in your life. What's the use of your going into a hole in the ground to dig for three ounces a day? The fact is, Armstrong, you are sharp. You were not made for this kind of work. Suppose you just throw away your pick and shovel, leave the mines, buy a suit of store clothes and dress up like a gentleman, and go at some business that suits your talent."

Armstrong was not long in putting these thoughts and sayings into action. He left

the diggings and invested in fine clothes. He looked like another man, but he was still the same Armstrong, nevertheless. He was not long in finding an opportunity to try a new profession. Walking forth in his fresh outfit, he had just concluded a long talk with himself about his bright prospects when he halted in front of a large tent with a sign on it, "Miners' Rest." Armstrong went in. It did not seem to him that he staid very long, but it was long enough to work a wonderful revolution in his feelings. When he came out he was a changed man—that is to say, he was a "changeless" man. He was thunderstruck, amazed, bewildered. He had lost his money, lost his new prospect, lost his self-conceit—lost everything but his new clothes and his old habit of talking to himself. It is useless to say that Armstrong was very mad. But there was no one to be mad at but Armstrong himself, so self number two was in for a rough lecture.

"Now, Armstrong, you are a nice specimen—you fool—you bilk—you dead beat—you inf—" Well, I need not repeat all the hard things he said. Like King Richard, he "found within himself no pity for himself."

But mere words were not sufficient. It was a time for action. But Armstrong never once thought of shooting, drowning, hanging or any other form of suicide. He was altogether too original, as well as too sensible for that. Yet he was resolved on something real and practical in the way of reformatory punishment. He felt the need of a self-imposed decree of bankruptcy, that should render the present failure as complete as possible, and prevent a similar course of foolishness in the future.

So the broken firm of "Armstrong & Self" went forth in meditation, long and deep. Some of his thoughts were almost too deep for utterance. But finally he stood by the dusty road along which the freight-wagons were hauling supplies to the mining camps up the Sacramento. One of these wagons, drawn by six yoke of oxen, was passing. Snap, snap, snap, in slow, irregular succession, came the keen, stinging reports of the long Missouri ox-whip. "Ge-up! A-haw-a-haw! Wo-haw!" shouted the tall, dust-begrimed driver, as he swung his whip and cast a sidelong glance at the broken firm, and wondered "What in thunder all them store-clothes was a-doin' thar." Now, when Armstrong saw the long column of white dust rising behind that wagon he was taken with an idea. So he shouted to the driver to know if he might be allowed to walk in the road behind the wagon.

"Get in and ride," said the driver.

"No," said Armstrong, "I wish to walk."

"Then walk, you crazy fool," was the accommodating response, as the driver swung his whip.

Then came the tug of war. Greek never met Greek more fiercely than did the two contending spirits composing the firm of Armstrong & Self at that particular moment. "Now, Armstrong," said the imperious head of the firm, "you get right into the middle of that road, sir, and walk in that dust, behind that wagon, all the way to the Packer's Roost, on the Yuba river." "What, with these clothes on? Why, it's fifteen miles, and dusty all the way." "No matter, sir, take the road. You squander your money at three-card monte; I'll teach you a lesson."

"Ge-up! A-haw-a-haw!" shouted the driver, as he glanced over his shoulder with a curious mingling of pity, contempt and wonder on his dusty face. More and more spitefully snapped the swinging whip as the slow-paced oxen toiled mile after mile under the heat of a September sun. And there, in the road, trudged Armstrong behind the wagon—slowly, wearily, thoughtfully, but not silently. He was a man who always spoke his thoughts.

"This serves you right, Armstrong. Any man who will fool his money away at monte deserves to walk in the dust." "It will spoil these clothes." "Well, don't you deserve it?" "The dust fills my eyes." "Yes, any man who gambles all his 'dust' away at three-card monte deserves to have dust in his eyes—and alkali dust at that." "The dust chokes me." "All right; any man who will buck at monte deserves to be choked. Keep the road, sir, the middle of

the road—close up to the wagon. Do you think you will ever buck at monte again, Armstrong?"

And so the poor culprit, self-arrested, self-condemned, coughed, and sneezed, and choked, and walked, and talked, mile after mile, and hour after hour; while the great wagon groaned and creaked, the driver bawled and swung his whip, the patient oxen gave their shoulders to the yoke, and the golden sun of September sunk wearily toward the west. The shadows of evening were beginning to fall when the wagon halted at the place called Packer's Roost, on the Yuba.

"Here we rest," sighed Armstrong, just above his breath, as he looked at the stream. "No you don't," answered the head of the firm. "You buck your money at monte, and talk about resting! Now, Armstrong, go right down the bank, sir, into that river." As the command was peremptory, and a spirit of obedience was thought the safest, Armstrong obeyed without parley; and down he went, over head and ears, store clothes and all, into the cold mountain stream. It was a long time that he remained in the water and under the water. He would come to the surface every little while to talk, you understand. It was impossible for Armstrong to forbear talking. "O, yes," he would say, as he came up and snuffed the water from his nose, "you'll buck your money away at three-card monte, will you? How do you like the water cure?" His words were, of course, duly punctuated by irregular plunges and catchings of breath.

It so happened that the man who kept the shanty hotel at the Packer's Roost had a woman for a wife. She, being a kind-hearted creature, besought her lord to go down and "help the poor crazy man out of the water."

"Pshaw!" said the ox driver, "he ain't a crazy man; he's a fool. He walked behind my wagon and talked to himself all the way from Scrabbletown."

Thereupon rose a lengthy discussion about the difference between a crazy man and a fool. But after a while, the landlord and the ox-driver went down to the bank and agreed to go Armstrong's security against bucking at monte in the future if he would come out of the water. So he came out and went up to the house.

"Will you have a cup of tea or coffee?" inquired the woman kindly.

"Yes, madam," said Armstrong, "I will take both."

"He is as crazy as he can be, sure," said the woman. But she brought the two cups as ordered. "Milk and sugar?" she inquired, kindly, as before.

"No, madam; mustard and red pepper," answered Armstrong.

"I do believe he is a fool," said the woman, as she went for the pepper and mustard.

Armstrong, with deliberate coolness, put a spoonful of red pepper into the tea and a spoonful of mustard into the coffee. Then he poured the two together into a large tin cup. Then the old conflict raged again, and high above the din of rattling tin cups and pewter spoons, sounded the stern command, "Armstrong, drink it, sir—drink it down." A momentary hesitation, and a few desperate gulps, and it was down. "O, dear," groaned our hero, as his throat burned and the tears ran from his eyes, "you buck your money away at three-card monte, do you?"

Now, the Thomsonian dose above described very nearly ended the battle with poor Armstrong. He was silent for quite a time, and everybody else was silent. After a while the landlord ventured to suggest that a bed could be provided if it was desired. "No," said Armstrong, "I'll sleep on the floor. You see, stranger," said he, eyeing the landlord with a peculiar expression, "this fool has been squandering gold-dust at monte, and he does not deserve to sleep in a bed."

So Armstrong ended the day's battle by going to bed on the floor. Then came the dreams. He first dreamed that he was sleeping with his head on the north pole and his feet in the tropics, while all the miners of Yuba were ground-slitching in his stomach. Next, he dreamed he had swallowed Mount Shasta for supper, and that the old mountain had suddenly become an

active volcano, and was vomiting acres and acres of hot lava.

Then the scenes were shifted, and he seemed to have found his final abode in a place of vile smells and fierce flames, politely called the antipodes of heaven. And while he writhed and groaned in sleepless agony, a fox-tailed fiend with his thumb at his nose was saying to him in a mocking voice: "You buck your money away at three-card monte, do you—hey?" But even this troubled sleep had an end at last, and Armstrong arose. When he looked at himself in the broken looking-glass that hung on the wall, he thought his face bore traces of wisdom that had never been there before. So he said: "I think you have learned a lesson, Armstrong. You can go to your mining now, sir, and let monte alone." Time showed that he was right. His lesson was well learned. The miners looked a little curious when he re-appeared at the camp, and still called him crazy. But he had learned a lesson many of them never learned, poor fellows. They continued their old way, making money fast and spending it foolishly—even giving it to monte dealers. But the Armstrong firm was never broken in that way but once. After that, whenever he saw one of the peculiar signs, "Robber's Roost," "Fleecer's Den," or "Fool's Last Chance," Armstrong would shake his head with a knowing air, and say to himself as he passed along: "O, yes, Armstrong, you've been there; you know all about that; you don't buck your money away at three-card monte—not much?"

Written for the Rocky Mountain Husbandman.

HOW TO IMPROVE TIME.

There are many ways of improving time. If we would try to realize and improve the opportunities that often slip by unheeded and unrecurred for, how much we might accomplish.

I think the right way to improve time would be to treasure up our leisure moments and spend them, not in idleness or frivolous occupations, but in reading useful and interesting books. The reading of history, orations and travels would cultivate the mind, and I think that the reading of such poets as Longfellow, Moore and Burns would cultivate both the head and the heart. Many of our most able writers are persons that have had to struggle with poverty, and meet the cold and contemptuous censure of the proud and unfeeling; yet by patience and perseverance, to what heights of honor and fame have many of them ascended; and it is only by labor and perseverance that they have achieved their greatness and crowned their names with glory and renown.

I have often thought that if we could realize how much our country and people have improved since the landing of the pilgrims at Plymouth rock, on December 16th, 1620, that it would make us ambitious to learn more every day, and become more enlightened, and to be able to penetrate the mysteries of science and learn of facts that as yet remain undiscovered.

We may often feel discouraged at not making more rapid progress in our studies, but we should impress upon our minds the fact that our education is not to be attained in a week or a month, but only by persevering application to our studies, and a proper improvement of our opportunities.

There is always a helping hand for those who are willing to help themselves. My own experience has taught me in a great degree to rely upon myself; and from a few instances that have come under my own observation, I have found that there is always some friend to help those who are really desirous of learning, and I believe that we can all accomplish much more than we think if we only try to improve our time as we should do, for "God helps those who help themselves." PHEBE.

GOLDEN SHEAVES.

The truth's worst foe is he who claims  
To act as God's avenger,  
And dream, beyond his sentry beat,  
The crystal walls in danger.

—Self-will is so ardent and active, that it will break the world to pieces to make a stool to sit upon.

—A good word is an easy obligation, but not to speak ill requires only our silence, which costs us nothing.