

THE TRUE AMERICAN.

\$1.50 PER ANNUM
IF PAID IN ADVANCE.

SINGLE COPIES
FIVE CENTS.

A Weekly Journal, Devoted to American Interests, Literature, Science, and General Intelligence.

Z. RAGAN, Editor and Proprietor.

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1857.

VOLUME 3.—NUMBER 11.

Selected Poetry.

GASPAR BECERRA.

BY H. W. LONGFELLOW.

By his evening fire, the artist
Pondered o'er his secret shame;
Baffled, weary, and disheartened,
Still he mused and dreamed of fame.

'Twas an image of the Virgin,
That had tasked his utmost skill;
But, alas! his fair ideal
Vanished and escaped him still.

From a distant Eastern land
Had the precious wood been brought;
Day and night the anxious master
At his toil untiring wrought.

Till discouraged and desponding
Sat he now in shadows deep,
And the day's humiliation
Found oblivion in sleep.

When a voice cried: "O master!
From the burning brand of oak
Shape the thought that stirs within
Thee!
And the startled artist woke.

Woke, and from the smoking embers
Seized and quenched the glaring
wood;
And therefrom he carved an image,
And he saw that it was good.

O thou sculptor, painter, poet!
Take this lesson to thy heart;
That is best which lieth nearest!
Shape from that thy work of art.

An Excellent Story.

BLOSSOM IN THE WILDERNESS.

BY VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND.

(The following sketch was first published in the "Ladies Repository," of Cincinnati, more than a year ago. We now take the liberty of presenting it to the readers of the Home Magazine.)—Ed. Home Magazine.

Do you ever form an estimate of the character of people, from the physiognomy of their houses, reader? I do. And so when the stage swept round the corner, I looked out eagerly, for, as the driver had told me, about "ten rods up the road" stood the house of Philander White. His wife was my mother's own cousin, and I was just thirteen years old when I went there to make my first visit. There had been some quarrel between the families two or three score of years anterior to my visit; and though my mother and Mrs. White had never participated in this, the feud of their ancestors had doubtless evolved something of coldness between them.

But to "cut short a long story," for pen and paper gossip may be more dignified, but not a whit better than tea-party scandal—I had been an invalid all the previous winter.

When the soft April days, to which my mother looked forward so eagerly, came, they brought no bloom to my cheek, no vigor to my step. My constitution seemed to have lost all its recuperative power, and the doctor said, "Send her into the country, Mrs. May. If that doesn't help her she is lost to you."

Just before this Mrs. White had heard, through a mutual friend, of my illness, and the very day of the blunt physician's ultimatum, brought a letter to my mother. "For the sake of our old love, Jane," it read, "let all that may have come between you and me, at an earlier time, be forgotten. The grass is springing green on the hills of Meadowbrook, and now—in this late May—is the time for Jennie to come to us. There is a prophecy of health for her in the soft wind, that is lifting the edges of my paper as I write. We know she is your girl, and we will be very tender of your darling. Will you not trust her with us for a single summer?"

And before another week had passed my trunk was packed for "Philander White's, Esq., Meadowbrook."

I looked out as I said, and there sat the pleasant white house, with its green window blinds, between the shrubbery in front and the cherry trees behind. My heart went out to it at once, as it did a moment later to the gentle voiced woman and the fair, dark haired girl, who rushed out on the broad, front steps, and kissing my cheeks, said, "Cousin Jennie, you are very welcome."

But it is not to tell you of that summer though I look across the gray years to its green picture in the May-land of my memory, that I have taken up my pen this morning.

Suffice it, the mountain breezes of Meadowbrook did their work well; and when, in the early autumn, my mother came for her child, she could hardly identify the rosy cheeked girl that rushed in, with her curls dangling about her face, and put up her rosy lips for a kiss.

I think it must have been nearly two months after my domestication at Aunt Myra's—for so I called my mother's cousin—before Uncle Charles Brace, her husband's brother, visited us. He was a minister and Cora and I anticipated the gentleman's advent with anything but pleasurable emotions.

Our preconceived notions of the gentleman's elongated visage and solemn, Puritanical manner, which we regarded as necessary concomitants of the profession, soon vanished before the kindling of his smile, and the winning gentleness of his manner. He was Uncle Phil's youngest brother, not more than twenty eight at that time; and his religion had deepened and harmonized his fine poetic temperament without checking the outflow of that under-current of humor which sparkled through his character. "Uncle Charlie" was soon our companion in our rides and rambles, and our confidant in all our girlish plans.

"You don't really mean so, Uncle Charlie?" and Cora's bright face was lifted from the roses and geraniums we were weaving into a bouquet for the parlor mantel. "You don't really think what you just said, that in every heart there is some fountain, some blossom in the human wilderness of every soul?"

He put down his paper, and came toward us. "I haven't a doubt of it, my little girl. The story I was just reading of the hardened old man who cried because the child gave him a bunch of marigolds corroborates my remark. The light that is in us can not quite become darkness; the heart that might bring forth 'fruit a hundred fold' for the harvest of heaven, will never yet become such a desert, but some good seed might take root therein."

"I don't believe 'twould though in Farmer Keep. You don't know him as well as I do, Uncle Charlie. He's one of the richest men in all Meadowbrook, worth thousands and thousands. He's an old bachelor, you know, and lives in that great red house on the road to Woodbury you remember? Well, he never goes to church; he never gives a cent to the poor; he never loved a human being, or did a kind thing in all his life. Now, don't you think Farmer Keep—why, Grandma Deane, how do you do?"

The old lady, whose entrance put this sudden period to my cousin's earnest peroration, came slowly toward the rocking chair Cora drew out for her. She was the oldest person in the village. The hair under her cap, white as hill side snow, had imprisoned the sunshine of four score and ten summers. But she still remained much of the physical and mental stamina which, with her active temperament, had made her so vigorous a woman for many years.

"What's that you're saying, child, about Farmer Keep?" said the old lady, with a pious smile, as she pinned her knitting sheath to her waist.

"Why I was telling Uncle Charlie what a cold kind of a man he is. You've always known him, Grandma Deane. Now, did he ever do a good thing, or ever love any body in his life?"

"Yes, he loved once a young girl, I remember."

"Farmer Keep loved a girl once?" repeated Cora, with a half-contemptuous and wholly skeptical curl of her berry-red lip. "She's forgotten she added, in an undertone to her uncle and me. Grandma Deane was slightly deaf.

"No, I haven't forgotten either," placing her hand on Cora's hair. "I have held Lucy Reid on my lap too often, and

rocked her cradle—poor, little motherless thing—too many times to forget."

Cora's look of incredulity had given way to one of curiosity. "Grandma Deane, won't you tell us all about it? Jennie and I will sit down on his big stool, and I know by that look in Uncle Charlie's eyes he wants to hear, too. Come, Jennie, let the flowers go;" and my vivacious cousin established herself on the stool at the old lady's feet.

Grandma Deane slipped the yarn round her little finger, and commenced: "Let me see, it cannot be more than forty two or three years this summer, since Justin Keep came up to Farmer Reid's, to let himself out for a hired boy through harvesting."

"The Reid's house stood a little this side of stony creek. There's nothing left of it now except the chimney, that looks out, gray and cold, from the green grass all about it; but fifty years ago it was a fine old place, with the lilacs in front, and the hop-vines running all round the back. Lucy was hardly three weeks old when she lost her mother. Her father never married again, and the child grew up there in the old home, as fair and sweet as the flowers about it.

"She was turning into fifteen when Justin came there that summer. He was a shy, strange, awkward sort of a lad, and the neighbors all said, 'Farmer Reid never'd get the salt for his porridge out of him.'"

"He'd been bound out till he was eighteen to some man down in Maine, and he hadn't a relation in the world that he knew of, nor a set of decent clothes, when he came to Farmer Reid's."

"But for all this, Justin proved himself a smart, likely boy, and the farmer, who somehow never was very forehanded—I always thought his wife's sudden death hurt him—found that Justin was a real prize.

"At first he was gloomy and silent, doing his work, and taking little notice of any body; but he couldn't stand it long before Lucy. I'd like to have seen the heart that girl's smile wouldn't have thawed out.

"She was just like a bird round the old place singing from morning till night; and her blue eyes, that were like her mother's, seemed always letting out one laugh as her red lips did another. I never wondered her father doted on her as he did and of course; Justin wasn't long in the house before she tried to make friends with him."

"Poor fellow! it must have seemed very strange at first; for I don't think anybody had ever given him a kind word till he came to Meadowbrook.

"But he made ladders for her flower vines to run on, and got shells for the borders, and propped up the dahlias, and did a thousand other things, which took them out into the garden after supper, and made them the best of friends.

"Lucy had a playful, childish way about her, that made her seem much younger than she was; and then she was small of her age; so at fifteen she did not seem a day older than you, Cora."

"Well, she rode on top of Justin's hay cart, and helped him to husk the corn in the barn, and pretty soon the neighbors noticed a great change in Justin.

"He got him a new suit of clothes, and his face lost its old down look; and after harvest farmer Reid made him an offer to stay all winter.

"So Justin staid, and taking Lucy's advice, went to the district school; and though he hadn't any education before, he went ahead of many an old scholar that winter.

"Well Justin staid with the farmer four years. Then he had a good offer somewhere in York State, and he concluded to accept it for the winter only.

"Lucy Reid was grown into a young woman by this time, and a handsome one, children, those dim eyes never looked on.

"I don't know how it happened, for Lucy might have had her pick of the boys for miles around, but somehow she took to Justin, and when he left they were engaged to be married one year from this time."

"Why, Grandma Deane, you aren't

going to stop now?" cried Cora in alarm, for the old lady had laid down her knitting.

"No my child," and she removed her spectacles and wiped her eyes. "But the rest is a sad story, and I must hurry over it.

"I don't know exactly how it happened, but that winter Lucy's father got into a terrible law suit with Squire Wheeler. There was some flaw in the title, and people said it was plain that the old man must let the homestead go.

"They said too, he'd never survive it; and better, perhaps, he never had, than just as he did. But one day squire Wheeler, to all the neighborhood's astonishment, rode over to the farm.

"What he did there was never exactly known, but in a little while it was rumored that the suit was withdrawn, and come spring, Lucy Reid was to be married to Sulliman Wheeler. And so it was. One bright March day she went into the old Church yonder and gave herself to him.

"He was a good looking man, but not over smart, the neighbors whispered; and I always thought it was his money more than anything else, that kept him up."

"But Justin, Grandma Deane—what became of Justin?"

"There is a dark look about the whole matter. Lucy was made the victim of some terrible falsehood. I never blamed her father, for the thought of losing the homestead seemed completely to shatter him.

"I only know that Squire Wheeler and his son were at the bottom of it, and that Lucy Reid went to the altar believing that Justin Keep had been false to her."

"Dear me! how dreadful! Did he ever come back?"

"Yes, the next May. Lucy had been a wife two months. He had not heard of her marriage. She was at home, visiting her father. When she met him at the door, she fell down like one stricken with a fit.

"But he carried her into the house, and there they learned all. Both had been deceived."

"It was a terrible scene that old front room witnessed. Justin swore a terrible oath of vengeance; and it was not till, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, the young wife knelt to the only man she ever loved, and pleaded for the life of her husband, that he promised for her sake to spare him.

"But from the day of Justin's visit, Lucy Wheeler was a changed woman. All the light and gladness of her being seemed dead in her, and she moved about her house, pale and quiet, with a look of patient suffering in her once sunny eyes, that made my heart ache to behold."

"And her husband? Did she ever tell him what she had learned?"

"I think not. His father and Lucy's died in less than two years after the marriage. The Squire was much less wealthy than people supposed. The next spring, Lucy and her husband removed west, and somehow people lost sight of them."

"And Justin?"

"You know the rest, my child. He became a moody, unhappy man; asking no sympathy and giving none. But he was always smart at a bargain, and in a few years laid up enough to buy out Deacon Platt's farm, when his son moved to the south.

"Ever since he has added acres to his lands, and hundreds to the banks; but, for all that, he's a man sour to all his race—a man who was never known to give a little child a smile, or a beggar a crust of bread. I have sometimes thought his heart was like a great desert, without a tree to shade or a stream to gladden it. And yet it bore a bright blossom once; and believe me children, for it is the word of an old woman, who has seen and known much of the ways of men, it is so always. The heart may be a great wilderness, but in some of its by-ways there has grown a flower.

Cora and I looked at each other and at Uncle Charlie. Just then Aunt Mira came in. She had been out, and had not heard of Grandma Deane's visit.

But Cora stole up to her uncle, and

winding her arms about his neck, whispered, "I shall believe it always, uncle Charlie, now I have heard that story about farmer Keep, there is a blossom in the wilderness of every heart."

It was a sultry August day in the summer I passed at Meadowbrook. The wind, low and slumberous as the hush of a mother's voice at nightfall, crept up through the corn, and down among the rye and wheat fields, that lay like broad, green folds about the dwelling of Farmer Keep. There was no poem of flowers written about the front yard; no graceful, harmonizing touches of creeping vine or waving curtains about the old red homestead; and yet it had a quiet substantial, matter of fact physiognomy, that somehow made a home feeling about your heart.

I think it must have been this unconscious feeling which decided the course of the girl who stood at the point where the two roads diverged, and gazed wistfully about her that afternoon.

She seemed very tired, and her coarse straw-bonnet and calico dress were covered with dust. If you had looked in her face you would not have forgotten it. It could not have been seen more than fifteen summers. It was very pale; and its sweet, sad beauty made you think of nothing but forest-flowers drenched with summer rains. Her eyes were of that deep moist blue, that rolls out from the under edge of April clouds, and her lips, ripe and full as meadow strawberries, had that touching sorrowfulness about them which tells you always the heart beneath is full of tears.

The girl's hand clasped tightly the little boy's by her side. The resemblance between them would have told you at once they were brother and sister, but his life could not have covered more than a third of hers. The little fellow's large eyes were full of tears, and the bright curls that crept out from his hat were damp with moisture. He was hungry, and tired, and motherless. What sadder history can one tell of a little child!

"There, Benny, cheer up. We'll go to that old red house there, and see what we can do. Don't it look nice with the great trees in front!" said the girl in a tone of assumed cheerfulness, and she quickened her steps.

"Yes, but I'm so tired, Lucy. If I only had a big piece of bread and butter!"

"Well, dear, I'll try and get you some there. It don't seem like begging to ask for it in the country."

A few moments later she opened the broad back gate, and went up to the kitchen door.—Farmer Keep's housekeeper—an old woman, with a yellow white cap, and check apron tied over her linsy wolsey skirt—answered her knock.

"Do you want any help, or do you know of any body round here that does?" timidly asked the girl.

The old lady peered at her with her dim eyes.

"No," she said. "There an't but four of us—Farmer Keep, and the two hired men, and me. It's harvest time just now, though, and I reckon you'll find a place up in the village."

"Thank you, Benny here—my little brother's very tired, for we've walked from the depot since ten o'clock. Can you let us come in and rest awhile?"

"Sartin you can." The sight of the little child touched the heart of the old woman, and they went into the large, old-fashioned kitchen, and sat down in the flag-bottomed chairs, while, with a glowing check, the girl cast about in her mind for the best manner in which to present her petition for food.

Before she had decided the master of the house suddenly entered the kitchen, for it was nearly dinner time. He was a large, muscular, broad-chested, sun-burnt man, with a hard gloomy expression on the face, where sixty years were beginning to write their history. He stood still with surprise, gazing on the new occupants of the kitchen, and the boy drew closer to his sister, and the girl threw up a timid, frightened glance into the gloomy face.

"You don't know of nobody round

here that wants a little help, do ye, farmer?" asked the old woman. "Here's a girl wants a place; and as she's walked from the depot, I told her she might come in and rest a bit afore she went up into the village to try her luck."

"No," shortly answered the farmer. "Dinner ready!" And the rich man turned away, without one gentle word or kindly look for the homeless children whom God had brought to his door.

"Lucy, Lucy, don't stay here; I'm afraid;" and the little boy's lips curled and quivered as he turned his face from the farmer's.

"Lucy, Lucy!" How these little trembling tones went down, down, into the man's hard heart! How the dead days of his youth burst out of their graves and rushed through his memory at that low broken "Lucy! Lucy!"

He turned and looked at the girl, not so sadly as before, but with a kind of eager questioning interest.

"What is your name?"

"Lucy Wheeler, sir."

He staggered back and caught hold of the nearest chair. "And what was your mother's?"

"Lucy Reid. She used to live in Meadowbrook, and so I came here to get work, for she told me to before she died. At that moment the angels looked down and saw the seed that had lain for two score years in the heart of Justin Keep spring up, and the flower blossomed in the wilderness!"

He strode across the kitchen to the bewildered girl. He brushed back her bonnet, and turned her face to the light.—He could not be mistaken. It was the one framed and hung up in the darkened room of his soul. The blue eye of his Lucy looked once more in his own. At that moment the little boy pushed up between them, and gazed wistfully into the man's face. Farmer Keep sat down and took the child on his knee. He tried to speak, but instead great sobs came up, and heaved his strong chest. The trio in the kitchen gazed on him in astonishment.

"Lucy's children, Lucy's children!" he murmured at last, in a voice whose tenderness was like that of a mother.

"God has sent you to me. For her sake this shall be your home; for her sake I will be a father to you."

Five years afterwards Cora wrote to me: "We are having fine times now, dear cousin Jennie, and mamma wants to know if you do not need to renew your rosy cheeks among the dews of Meadowbrook. Uncle Charlie is with us this summer and if you were here also my happiness would be complete.

Lucy Wheeler—you remember her—has the place in my heart next to yours. Her disposition is as lovely as her face, and that is saying a great deal, for its rare sweet beauty does me good to behold it. Farmer Keep seems to worship her and Benny. He is a changed man now, and goes to church regularly on the Sabbath. He has spared no pains or expense in Lucy's education, and she will be a most accomplished woman. She is here very often, and I have my suspicions that Uncle Charlie—nimporte; I will not trust this to pen and paper.

"But, O Jennie, what a lesson this has taught me! How it has deepened my faith in God and in humanity!

"Now, when my heart yearns over the wretched, the sinning, the outcast, I remember always there is a flower in the wilderness."

A QUESTION.—A minister sojourning in our city, in a conversation on duelling, was made aware for the first time that surgeons, in their professional capacity, always accompanied the parties to the field. He asked (and the question has an appearance of reason, too) why ministers did not attend in their professional capacity as it was likely many who went on the field with serious intentions, one would probably need the consolations of religion! The suggestion is an original one, we believe, and we commend it to those who take part in establishing the usage of "honors."—Savannah Republican.

Dancing and Scripture.

The N. Y. Churchman in a recent issue, said, "Dancing, in itself, is an innocent recreation, and is beautiful as it is graceful. God is not dishonored by it; on the contrary, the Psalmist says, 'Let them praise his name in the dance.' And so they may—all the Puritanism in the world to the contrary notwithstanding."

Whereupon the Southern Churchman thus rejoins:

"Our contemporary quotes Scripture to sustain dancing. We do not know that this is altogether to be wondered at, when so very wicked a person as Satan is guilty of the same impropriety. Not, of course, by any manner of means would we be so understood, as classing our respected contemporary with so evil an Existence. We only allude to this, that it may be seen how Scripture may be abused. Here, for instance, are certain persons taught a worldly amusement, not at all for 'recreation.' Our contemporary will bear with us when we tell him, that this is all cant. There are many kinds of cant. There is an Evangelical cant, a High Church cant, a Romish cant, and a Worldly cant. Dr. Johnson's advice, therefore, is to be addressed to the Churchman—'My dear sir, free your mind of cant. It is all cant, saying children are taught to dance on account of the recreation. They are taught to dance at school only that they may be able to dance at balls and parties, and when they go into company. And to advise people to learn to dance, that they may mix with the most worldly people, under circumstances when everything combines to chill all devotional feeling, where there is the world and nothing else; and then to apologize for all this by saying, that the Psalmist says, 'Let them praise his name in the dance.' Oh! Mr. Churchman, we cannot but again think of Satan quoting Scripture to our blessed Lord.

"Let them praise His name in the dance." So say we. And, therefore, let there be no dancing whatever in which the name of God is not praised. With this rule there would be an entire abolition of dancing, except that kind practised among our shaker friends.

Now it cannot be that we have misunderstood our contemporary, and after all what he means is, that we should turn Shakers, and so conduct our religious services as to what we may be able to have little dances interspersed therewith. Can it be that the Churchman means this! Surely his well known orthodoxy forbids such an interpretation. We, therefore, must fall back upon our original interpretation, and condemn our contemporary with the 'adage of Scripture for misapplying the inspired record.—Haynes Eagle.

GET A HOME.—Get a home, rich or poor, get a home, and learn to keep that home and make it happy to your wife and children by your beaming presence; learn to love simple pleasures, flowers of God's own planting, and music of his own, the bird, wind, water-fall. So you shall help me to stem the tide of desolation, poverty and despair, that come upon so many, through score of little things. Oh, the charms of a home, though it be a little neat home; comfort dwells there that shuns the gilded halls of society.—Live contented in your little home, and wait for God to give you a nobler one.

A well known physician in town is very much annoyed by an old lady who is always sure to accost him in the street for the purpose of telling over ailments. Once she met him in Broadway, and he was in a very great hurry. "Ah! I see you are quite feeble," said the doctor: "shut your eyes, and show me your tongue." She obeyed, and the doctor, quickly moving off, left her standing there for some time, in this ridiculous position, to the infinite amusement of all who witnessed the funny scene.

MURKIN STORY.—A man living near Columbia River Oregon, tells the following story concerning the mosquitoes.—Being in the woods, he was one day annoyed by them that he took refuge under an inverted potato kettle. His first emotions of joy at his happy deliverance and secure asylum were hardly over when the mosquitoes having found him began to drive their probosces through the kettle; fortunately he had a hammer in his pocket and he clinched them down as fast as they came through, until there was such a host of them fastened to the poor man's domicile, that they rose and flew away with it, leaving him shelterless.