

## SPRING SONNETS.

BY PARK BENJAMIN, EDITOR OF THE "NEW WORLD."

I.

The virgin May, young, coy and blushing, trips  
 Along the fields with downcast, modest eyes—  
 And, looking round her with a sweet surprise,  
 Smiles to behold the delicate, green tips  
 Of tender leaves, and buds that ope their lips  
 To the moist kisses of the amorous air,  
 Whose rival is the bee. Oh, false and fair!  
 To yield your honey-dew to wanton sips!  
 The sky is angry with ungrateful May,  
 That she her blooming favours thus bestows—  
 And so keen darts from misty quiver throws;  
 And the Spring's darling weeps the morn away.  
 Capricious nymph! At eve no more she plains;  
 For other, flattering airs, come whispering softer strains!

II.

The birds sing cheerily, the streamlets shout  
 As if in echo—tones are all around—  
 The air is filled with one pervading sound  
 Of merriment. Bright creatures flit about—  
 Slight spears of emerald glitter from the ground,  
 And frequent flowers, like helms of bloom are found;  
 And, from the invisible army of fair things,  
 Floats a low murmur like a distant sea!  
 I hear the clarions of the insect-kings  
 Marshal their busy cohorts on the lea.  
 Life, life in action—'tis all music, all—  
 From the enlivening cry of children free  
 To the swift dash of waters as they fall;  
 Released by thee, oh Spring, to glad, wild liberty!

## PRAIRIE SKETCHES.

CAMANCHES.—It was on the fifth day of our travel homeward, after leaving San Miguel, when the mountains were slowly lessening behind us, and far away before us stretched the great plains, that our attention was attracted at about eleven o'clock, A. M. by the appearance of some three or four objects in motion at a great distance away to our right. A few indistinct spots appeared which would scarcely have been discernable at all had they not been in motion. We continued on our way with our eyes fixed on the far far horizon where these objects were seen, not apprehending danger; though being in a region much frequented by marauding tribes, we felt probably a sufficient mingling of apprehension to enliven our curiosity. It was soon evident that what we saw could not be a buffalo, and a very few moments more brought us to the conviction that a band of wild horses were approaching us, for the swift and graceful lope of that animal became discernible, and as those in advance rose more distinctly into sight, other spots appeared behind, and little knots of five or six were seen scattered about the same portion of the prairie, all seemingly moving toward where we were.

Suddenly one of the Mexican soldiers, who had ridden off to some distance for the purpose of scanning more nearly the advancing objects, was seen to turn and make back toward the caravan, seemingly in great confusion and surprise. When near enough to make himself heard, he shouted to us, "*Indios! Indios! Camanches! Camanches!*" and instantly the wagons were drawn up, forming a *corral*, into which all the loose animals were driven. Lieut. Hernandez who commanded our escort of twenty-five soldiers, furnished us by the Governor of Santa Fe, gave us now a specimen of his military capacities, and set about arranging for defence with great coolness and deliberation. Some description of these soldiers is necessary, as also the condition and strength of our whole party.

There were five leaders, each of whom employed from five to ten retainers or attendants. The chief of these leaders is entitled to first attention. He always rode a more than ordinary sized mule, rather rough looking, but very docile and very strong. His heavy saddle was ornamented with brass and silver headed nails, driven into the high pommel and back, and forming fanciful but unmeaning devices. The bridle—the wooden stirrups, with their thick and heavy leather guards—the Spanish bit, locking the poor animal's mouth up, and not suffering it to eat or drink, with the jingling ornaments hanging under the jaw—the skins hanging from the pommel, guarding the rider's legs from sun, and rain, and cold,—all these were more or less decorated with knobs and plates of fine silver, but so coarsely worked as to look no better than as many bits of tin. *Don Jose*, upon his mule, was a very formidable looking person for one who was so completely inoffensive. He was master of a very beautiful and very old double-barreled shot gun, and ditto broadsword. These were invariably every morning fastened securely to the pommel of his saddle, and taken off again at night, by a servant; and the writer, upon this emergency, finding *Don Jose* in some perplexity with his weapons, went to his assistance, and found that the shot-gun was entirely useless, the nipples being broken and filled with fragments of caps, and the broad sword was so rusted within the scabbard, that no effort could extricate it, and it was not actually drawn during the whole course of our travel. Such was *Don Jose* for a warrior, and such, with a little variation,

may serve as a description of the other Spanish traders and their servants.

The uniform of the soldiers was as follows:—A round jacket, and pantaloons open on the outside from the knee down, with cuffs, collars, and other trimmings of red flannel, leather leggings tied round the calves and ankles, and coarse shoes. Their weapons were—a short *escopeta* or fusil, a long iron pointed lance, and knife stuck in the belt. They were all mounted on mules, and each carried, hanging to his saddle, a long rope with a slip noose at one end, and a hollow gourd for transporting water. They were in truth as good a sample of

"A tattered host of mounted scare-crows,"

as were ever dignified with the name of soldiers, yet they manifested little alarm, and having been placed in the most defensive order by the lieutenant, and the brass cannon having been drawn in front of the encampment, each man planted his lance in the ground, cocked his fusil, and awaited the approach of the enemy.

Five of the objects that we had seen were now swiftly approaching us, and the forms of the Indians were distinctly discernible, mounted upon their half-wild horses. Other groups were hurrying on behind, numbering in all something less than a hundred, though others were still rising into sight in the distance, and of course we could form no conjecture of how many were yet behind. The lieutenant was undoubtedly a brave little fellow (he was of slender but sinewy mould, well traced features, with dark, flashing eyes, and an eagle nose), and to his intrepid conduct on this occasion it is likely we were in a great measure indebted for our subsequent safety. After arranging the camp for defence he took the bridle from the mule and placed it in the mouth of a swift horse, and, jumping upon its naked back, he dashed off to meet the approaching Indians, ordered no man to follow him until he should make a signal for assistance by firing his *escopeta*.

In a very short space of time he was at such a distance as made it impossible for us to distinguish his form from those of the Indians, until presently we saw him approach and ride along in front of the approaching enemy, flourishing his short broadsword above his head, the beams of which glanced in the mid-day sun, glittering defiance to the red marauders. Here the lieutenant took his mule, and a single Indian advanced to meet him. After passing a few moments in conversation, they advanced side by side towards the camp, and in twenty minutes time the whole scattered band of Camanches, numbering between three and four hundred, had advanced and completely hemmed in our camp, containing about sixty souls.

They were intimidated, however, by the bold and well prepared appearance we made (though indeed much of it was *but* appearance), but the sight of the cannon was most effectual in arousing their fears; and as one and another came nearer, to reconnoiter us, their eyes were instantly fixed upon the brass field pieces. They sat upon their horses with as much carelessness as though they were lounging on buffalo skins within their wigwams. From men of sixty to boys of ten, all seemed equally home upon horseback, and their whole appearance was entirely different from any Indians we had yet seen. There was no sign of civilization about them;—from head to foot they were *Indian*—close fitting jackets of deer skin, cut out in small crescents, which in a slight degree gave a resemblance of scale armour, long hair flying in the breeze; and not one of them was without a bow in one hand, and a bundle of barbed arrows in the other, while they held their slight yet strong deer skin bridles in their teeth. Five hundred arrows might have been launched at us there before we could have fired one ball from our cannon, which conveyed so much terror to our enemies. But, although of all the Indian tribes the Camanche is most warlike and dangerous to the trader, yet was this party that now crossed our path thoroughly frightened, and Lieutenant Hernandez understood their perplexity well, and knew as well how to profit by his advantage; and he talked to the savages as though they were all at his mercy, and he could, if he pleased, exterminate them all in an instant. They said they were in search of buffalo, and had no intention to molest us, upon which Hernandez told them they might depart, assuming an air as though he had magnanimously granted them their lives. They care little for the Spaniards, but they dread the Americans; and the first question these Indians asked us was how many Americans were in our party.

Hernandez still maintained his confident demeanour, ordered the camp to be struck, and the Camanches, after hovering round for two or three hours, at last went off in scattered groups, as they had approached us. They were covered from head to foot with vermilion; and as they dashed along the prairie upon their untamed horses, with their long hair streaming behind them, they seemed like mounted flames of fire, and the very horses seemed to spurn the ground, as though they were under the controul of devils!

## THE BUFFALO.

We had as yet seen only small bands of twenty and thirty buffalo. The largest herd that had crossed us numbered about sixty or seventy; but these small bands fly in great fear at the sight of travellers, and are soon out of sight. It was soon after commencing our morning travel, along the Arkansas on the American side, that we discovered a vast number of black spots far away on the prairie before us. We had butchered two cows after a tiresome hunt the day before, and being well supplied with meat, we determined to

recruit a little before we resumed the excitement of the hunt. Gradually, as we advanced, the dark spots grew larger and increased in number, until our efforts to count them were rendered utterly useless. Still we pressed forward, and at about noon day we found ourselves in the very centre of an enormous band that opened a path for us as we approached, and closed again behind us as we moved along. We were ourselves as much at a loss to judge of their number as the reader will be. It would have been as easy for us to stand still in a forest and count the trees, as then to have made a calculation, and the writer can but say that they covered the earth in all directions. The natural green of the prairie was changed to black, and away to the horizon all around us spread a dense herd of the wild inheritors of the wilderness.

We travelled till evening with the same prospect around us. The next day it was the same. The enormous band had come from some region yet undisturbed by the hunter, and was then leaving the exhausted pastures to seek fresh provender. This day we resolved to enjoy the sport of hunting, and from morn till evening we chased the poor brutes about the prairie, killing the unfortunate animals in mere wantonness, as we were not in want of meat, and the dead carcasses were left to feed the wolves in the night.

The sounds emitted by these strange creatures are peculiar. They do not bellow loudly as would be imagined from their enormous bulk and untameable wildness, but breathe or blow, particularly when in fright, something like the sneeze of a horse, but more sudden and not so sharp. The noise made by the immense band through which we were travelling, conveyed to the mind of the writer the distant surging of the Ocean, or midnight thunder when heard between sleeping and waking. It requires a swift horse to catch them when put to their speed, and yet they move most awkwardly, and it would seem with great labour. Their enormous shoulders and hump rise and fall, reminding one of a tired horse, with a drunken rider clinging to its neck, making a bad effort to canter.

The next day, the third that we passed in company with this great herd, we enjoyed a spectacle still more surprising than any thing we had yet witnessed.—The animals commenced crossing the Arkansas. The strongest instinct with the buffalo, next to its quick sense of smell, is to press forward. One will follow the other, and never until the hunter is directly at its side will it break its track. Thus the instant one descended into the water ten followed, and fifty followed the ten, till the whole extent of the river, within our view, was black as the land with the buffalo. We nooned at this spot, and for three hours the Arkansas was filled with the buffalo, crossing so fast that they could not stop to drink, lest they should be overwhelmed by the crowd thronging behind.

Those who have paid no attention to the narratives already given to the public, relative to this extraordinary animal, will think the writer is exercising the old traveller's privilege, and their unbelief will be perfectly excusable, for indeed the story must seem strange.

The writer only relates what he has seen, but now listen to what he has heard, and what he believes to be true. A party of mountain trappers once, descending the Missouri through a buffalo region with their flat-boats loaded with furs, were compelled to halt four days, to allow the passage across the river of a band of buffalo; and the river being deep and the crowd so great, hundreds were drowned, and their carcasses were afterwards seen by the descending trappers, lying among the logs upon the islands and along the banks.—*New Orleans Picayune.*

## LITERARY NOTICE.

FROM N. Y. MIRROR.

Master Humphrey's Clock. The new work by "Box."

This promises to be the *chef d'œuvre* of the popular author of *Pickwick* and *Nickleby*. It is written in his richest vein, or, we may properly say, in all his richest veins; for his versatility of style, and his excellence in each as it changes, are among the most striking of his literary characteristics.

Master Humphrey is an old man, who, with certain cronies of his own, keeps legendary records, old stories, and other queer conceits, stored away in a favourite old clock, which ticks in his *sanctum*, a time-honoured time-keeper. This clock suggests the following eloquent and touching passage. Master Humphrey says—

"It is associated with my earliest recollections. It stood upon the staircase at home (I call it home still, mechanically) nigh sixty years ago. I like it for that, but it is not on that account, nor because it is a quaint old thing in a huge oaken case curiously and richly carved, that I prize it as I do. I incline to it as if it were alive, and could understand and give me back the love I bear it.

"And what other thing that has not life could cheer me as it does; what other thing that has not life (I will not say how few things that have) could have proved the same patient, true, untiring friend! How often have I sat in the long winter evenings feeling such society in its cricket-voice, that raising my eyes from my book and looking gratefully towards it, the face, reddened by the glow of the shining fire, has seemed to relax from its staid expression and to regard me kindly; how often in the summer twilight, when my thoughts have wandered back to a melancholy past, have its regular whisperings recalled them to the calm and peaceful present; how often, in the dead tranquillity of night, has its bell broken the oppressive silence, and seemed to give me assurance that the old clock was still a faithful watcher at my chain—