

THE BRADFORD REPORTER.

ONE DOLLAR PER ANNUM, INVARIABLY IN ADVANCE.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY AT TOWANDA, BRADFORD COUNTY, PA., BY E. O'MEARA GOODRICH.

VOL. XV.—NO. 38.

TOWANDA:

Saturday Morning, March 3, 1855.

Selected Poetry.

BEAUTIFUL STANZAS.

"I will lead them in the paths they have not known."

ISAIAH XLIII, 16.

How few who, from their youthful day,
Look on to what their life may be;
In colors soft and bright and free,
How few who to such paths have brought
The hopes and dreams of early thought!
For God, through ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

The eager hearts, the souls of fire,
Who pant to toil for God and man;
And view with eyes of keen desire
The upward way of toil and pain;
Almost with scorn they think of rest,
Of holy calm, of tranquil breast,
But God, through ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

A lowlier task on them is laid—
With love to make the labor light;
And their beauty they must shed
On quiet homes and lost to sight.
Changed are their visions high and fair,
Yet, calm and still, they labor there;
For God, through ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

The gentle heart that thinks with pain,
It scarce can lowest tasks fulfill;
And, if it dared its life to loan,
Would ask but pathway low and still.
Often such lowly heart is brought
To act with power beyond its thought;
For God, through ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

What matter what the path shall be?
That end is clear and bright to view;
We know that we a strength shall see,
Whatever the day may bring to do,
We see the end, the house of God,
But not the path to that abode;
For God, through ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

Selected Tale.

BELL-THE-WOLF:

OR,
How Ben Holick Won his Bride.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

In the sequestered valleys of that noble chain of mountains known as the Washtah range, the genuine American backwoodsman is still to be found. Homely but upright, rough but hardy, he is as remarkable for the self-sacrificing generosity of his friendships as for the deadliness of his hatred. The toils of the chase, the cultivation of the land, and above all, the rearing of cattle, furnished him with the means of subsistence. For these last named operations the region is especially adapted, by the mildness of the climate and by its undulating surface, here rising into grassy slopes and anon sinking into depressed hollows of marshland covered with acres of reed and rush. The rearing of vast herds of cattle is thus a matter of very little trouble.

One enemy, however, the backwoodsman has to contend with, one that, in spite of rifle and trap, in spite of wearisome pursuits and endless stratagems, he has never yet been a match for. The cunning, merciless and bloodthirsty enemy was the wolf. In vain the backwoodsman brought all his skill and experience to bear against the crafty thief. Seldom could the wary beast be tempted within gun shot. In spite of constant watchings, the wolves increased and multiplied year by year, and the herds diminished in proportion, till the cattle-farmers felt that desperate measures must be adopted, unless they were prepared to own themselves vanquished, and to quit the field and give up their employment altogether. A backwoodsman vanquished by the wolves—rattlesnakes and buffaloes! it was not to be thought of; life-long disgrace and shame were involved.

That under such circumstances the best shot should be regarded as the best man was but natural; and so it was that Benjamin Holick, who, in the half year he had come out of Missouri to settle at Washtah, had killed no less than seventeen of these formidable beasts with his rifle—received the honorable sobriquet of Wolf Ben, with the reputation of being the most skillful marksman in the district.

Wolf Ben was, moreover, a fine fellow to look at; he stood full six feet high, had a giant's breadth of shoulders and a brawny muscular arm, and was considered a more powerful wrestler than a man, though himself no craven, would care needlessly to provoke. With all this, he was the most good tempered, patient, obliging friend that a settler could make. A good word would win anything from him; he would give away his powder to the last charge, and the very last crust out of his wallet.

Ben's affections were fixed upon the only daughter of Robert Sutton, a charming girl, and heiress of all her father's wealth. Ay, there was the rub; that he, a poor adventurer in the world, but his knife and his rifle, and his strong arm, should be accepted of as the son-in-law of a man who had the largest possessions in all Washtah and Red River, and who only came up the mountains once a year for his health, and for the sake of pasturage for the flocks, and was not a very likely thing to happen. And when he remembered too that Sutton was commonly reputed a covetous man, of what weight with such a one would be Benjamin's personal advantages?

Ben had often tried to devise some scheme for getting a little money—of late he had thought of it much and sadly—just enough to give him a start, to set him going as it were. To earn it by daily labor, and so from week to month to add dollar to dollar seemed too tedious. And yet something must be done, for he knew that he would not be the first wooer for whom old Sutton had placed the bench outside the door. But where, in the quiet course of this simple woodland life, was he likely to meet

with the golden opportunity and to seize it? A thoughtful sadness fastened on him. He avoided the houses of his companions—passed whole days and nights in the woods, having nothing to show for his walks but the scalps of the wolves he destroyed—the three dollars a head with which the State rewarded his good service, and which still amounted to a mere trifle, being carefully put by, as the foundation of his claim for the hand of pretty Mabel.

It was about this time that, in a short excursion in Texas, old Sutton was told, by some of the outlying cattle-farmers there, of a plan for utterly banishing the wolves from any district in which they had established themselves. The plan was this: A wolf to be caught, and taken alive; and then, after having a bell fastened around his neck, he was to be set at liberty. The creature would naturally turn to his comrades; and so sooner did these hear the unwelcome sound than they took to their heels, and in wild confusion fled before their former associate. But wherever they fled the bell still followed: for the strange ornament around his throat, and the dinning noise in his ears, made the solitude doubly distasteful to him.

He shakes himself, he rolls, he leaps, he spins round and round, he essays every possible means of ridding himself of the torment; and exasperated to the highest pitch to find that he can no longer stand unobserved and noiselessly upon his prey, but is ever betraying his approach by the sound of the hated bell, he seeks the society of his brother wolves; and there too he only succeeds in driving herd after herd from the mountains which he had formerly selected as his dwelling place; and, urged to extremity, finds himself at last to seek another hunting ground. There again the sound of the bell betrays him, and frequently drives the flocks, in well compacted phalanx, to the shelter of the settlement.

The experiment must assuredly be tried in Washtah. Sutton returns on a sudden, takes counsel with the neighboring farmers; and in concert with them announces a reward of twenty dollars to whosoever shall bring a live wolf to the village.

It was all very well to affix the reward, but the wolves were more crafty than the hunters. And even after Ben had brought in scalp after scalp, it seemed to him impossible to catch one of the cunning beasts alive and bring him unharmed to the farmer; for the pits that he dug for them were all empty, or trapped only the neighbors' sheep or swine.

When Benjamin Holick was unsuccessful the other lads of the settlement soon began to despair; and the farmers, red hot upon the matter, and determined on any terms to make trial of the experiment, raised the sum to be given for a real live wolf to the unheard of price, in these woodland regions, of two hundred dollars.

This was truly a stimulus to Benjamin. With two hundred dollars could he not stock a little farm, purchase a few cattle, make a beginning; and then Mabel!—ay, who knows if she would not be able to persuade her father, if once he saw Ben with the black thief in chains at his heels? But there was no time to be lost; for the reward had of course brought all the hunters of the neighboring country into the field, and the woods resounded with the stroke of the axe upon the sapling trees that the men cut down to prepare the only kind of traps known in the district. Steel traps for instance were useless, as there was risk of wounding, if not of destroying the prey—and the premium was offered exclusively for a "live and unharmed" wolf.

It was at this season that a visitor came to the mountains, who occasioned the greatest uneasiness to our friend Ben, and even became dangerous to him. This was a so-called cousin of Sutton's, a citizen in a blue coat with silver buttons, and trousers with straps to them. How the children laughed when he went into a house and set down! How they put their dirty faces together and whispered; and then, casting a shy, sidelong glance at the "straps," and bursting into fits of uncontrollable laughter, tumbled in wild confusion out of the door. This, however, was no great matter—the uncivils were but children who knew nothing of the world, and as little whether a man had anything in him or not. And this man, certainly had an uncle who passed for the richest planter in Alabama, and he was his only heir. No wonder that old Sutton received him in the most friendly manner, treated him as his son, house and everything in it, his daughter's hand not excepted, entirely at his disposal.

Mr. Metcalf appeared to be fully aware of the treasures thus thrown in his way; and what if the young lady herself were shy and avoided his presence, and on every possible occasion gave him to understand that all the sweet things he said were positively distasteful to her—was he, a man brought up in New Orleans, to be driven from his purposes by a little coquetry? Like a prudent man he strove by every means to ingratiate himself with the father, flatter the old man in all his weakness, and in a very short time persuaded him that he was the best hunter, the boldest rider, the finest fellow that had ever worn the hunter's coat, &c., &c., till by his cunning and prodigious display of learning, especially in things which he had never heard before, he so beguiled his host that Sutton was heard to say that Mr. Metcalf was the smartest and best man in the county; and that if his daughter refused to give him her hand, she would have to reckon without him, her father, on that score.

Poor Mabel! in a private meeting with Ben she declared that it would be impossible to live without him, and pronounced herself the most miserable creature on the face of the earth. Ben perfectly agreed with her as he held her hand in his, and looked with a sad and sympathetic gaze into her blue eyes. "Dear Mabel," said he, "be not cast down—all will be well. I have been at work all night, and have set four new traps with a dainty bait in each; the wolf once caught, I secure a small capital, and say to your father, 'Friend Sutton, I wish to marry your daughter. I have a comfortable home to take her to, and I want nothing but herself. I ask for no portion or dowry,' and when I add that you are favorable to my suit—"

"Oh!" cried Mabel, interrupting him, and sobbing as she spoke, "but you will not be the first to catch the wolf. The dandy stranger has been talking of nothing the whole evening but the newly invented snare; and he tells my father that he is going to set it in the woods. Ah! he knows all the tricks and snares that they invent in the cities, and he will baffle you, and turn you out of the path yet."

"Let not that trouble you, Mabel," replied Ben, soothingly, while a smile of self-confidence stole over his face. "Don't be downcast for that. Men may invent snares and traps in the cities, but they must learn to use them in the forest; and if the city-bred prove too much for us there, it's our own fault, and we deserve it. And as to what you tell me of his pretending to know something of the hunter's craft, why, there I meet him on my own ground and yield to no man living; and now, since I've been talking with you, I don't know how it is, but I feel as if new life and confidence had been infused into me. Only be true to Mabel!—Your father cannot force you into marriage; and when he finds that I want neither his goods nor his gold, but only yourself for my wife, he will see at once that such a son-in-law will bring him far more honor than would the smart citizen and I shall yet win a consent from him." So taking a cheerful leave of the maiden, he shouldered his rifle, and walking with a firm step and a brave heart toward the forest.

The favorite resort of the wolves was an enclosure adjoining the homesteads and at the outskirts of the wood, where the cattle were lured down at night; and here it was that Benjamin Holick had set his snares. One of these—that to which he especially looked to crown his hopes with success—was placed near a track the wolves had made between two elevated ridges, so narrow that it was impossible for them to pass without observing the tempting bait with which it was garnished—the head of a fresh killed horse. The locality had one great advantage. It was commanded by the summit of a craggy rock, from whence Benjamin's eagle glance could at once ascertain how matters stood below. The necessity of close inspection was thus obviated, and there were no treacherous footprints to arouse the suspicions of the wary foe. He could not indeed see to the bottom of the pit, but he could see whether the trap was set or whether it had been sprung.

There was nothing to be done at night, and after his parting with Mabel, Ben made at once for his bivouac on the hill side, where he had determined to remain until he had achieved the enterprise. He soon succeeded in kindling a fire, and after eating his simple supper, rolled himself up in his blanket and quietly fell asleep.

There was no need of cock-crow to arouse him in the morning, for at the first plaintive note of the whip-poor-will he had started to his feet, and prepared his coffee, of which every sportsman in the backwoods carries with him a supply roasted and ground, in a linen or leather bag—and then sat impatiently watching for the first streaks of daylight in the eastern sky.

Slowly, but at last—at last, the longed for light began to dawn, the signal for the return of the wolves to their accustomed and generally inaccessible dens; and now, creeping rather than walking, and carefully avoiding such withered branches and cracking brushwood as might have told to some lingering beast the tale of his approach, Ben made the best of his way to the look out on the rock.

The top of the snare was no longer to be seen—it had indeed fallen! His heart beat with feverish anxiety, and it was with a strong effort that he restrained his impatience, and waited for a full morning light ere he descended to the hunting ground. The suspense at length became intolerable, and as he looked with fixed and straining gaze against the growing light, he became convinced of the fact—it was no longer a hope—a doubt—it was a certainty. The snare had fallen, and a wolf must be at the bottom. With rapid pace he descended the height, and made for the spot where, amid a thicket of sassafras and spicebushes, in a heap of driftwood brought down by the mountain torrent, and sprinkled by its clear rushing waters, the snare had been laid.

"Hurrah!" shouted Ben, giving vent to his ecstasy in one loud ringing note of triumph. He had reason—for there, at the bottom of the pit, looking shy, and as if ashamed to be seen in the daylight, was a fine, black coated beast. The creature's eyes glared fiercely when through the opening of his prison, they fell on the form of the young hunter—the most perilous of all the enemies by whom he was beset, into whose hands he could have fallen.

"Hark ye, beastie," said Benjamin, looking down between the interstices of the fallen beams, which were about a handbreadth apart. "I have put a stop to your handiwork at last, you hoary old glutton! And there you are, after having snarled away all your fellows from the newly discovered dainty, seated in the place of honor behind the grating! Only wait a while, and I have still more glorious sport in prospect for thee."

The wolf showed his teeth and grinned savagely at the young hunter as he bent over the trap, but no attempt to stir, seeming like an enraged dog to await his opportunity for a spring. It was not Ben's purpose to irritate the animal further; he cast one more look down and then laughing cried—

"I am not altogether unkindly disposed toward thee, old fellow, for though you are not altogether the most likely looking of suitors, you shall yet help me to win a bride; and so we will part friends;" and then nodding pleasantly to his captive and shouldering his rifle, Ben sprang, leaping down the somewhat deep declivity that led by the nearest path to the homesteads, in order to get assistance without delay, and so at once to tell the wolf: "and then hurrah! how he will jump!" He shall go free enough then; a clear course and liberty at will.

The inhabitants of Woodville had not perceived the young hunter's approach, and he took all by surprise as he rushed, singing and shouting into Sutton's domicile, and poured out

such a wild rhapsody about wolves, scalps, &c. that no wonder it was soon noised abroad that Benjamin Holick had gone out of his wits. By degrees, however, the matter was made clear; and no sooner did old Sutton see how things were going, than he took down his gun and powder-bag, and, fully participating in the young man's delight, prepared at once to set forth with him, regretting only the absence of Metcalf, who had also passed the night in the wood, watching.

"Ah! he'll have had like luck, I guess," said the old man, "for he had fine prospects, and seemed sure of his game. Well, well, there's no harm done, you can divide the reward, and two wolves are, after all, surer than one. Is it a wolf that you've trapped?"

"Ay, and a fine one, too, as ever tore a calf!"

"Capital, capital!—come along, Ben. Holick! Scipio and Cato, away with ye both!—Where did you say the beast is? By the frog-spring?"

"On the bank of the stream, about six hundred paces from the split in the hill-ridge, and just opposite where the devil's pulpit hangs over the brook. The diggers will be able to find the spot."

"All right, man; they can't well miss it!—Scipio knows every inch of the ground—and now for the rope and the bag. Have you got the collar Ben?"

The young man nodded assent, shook the little bell right merrily, and seemed hardly able to wait till the spot was reached, so eager was he to complete the achievement, and to seal his victory.

Their quick walk soon brought them in the vicinity of Ben's supposed preserve.

"Hey, Ben! what are you peeping at there?" cried Sutton, as the young man had leaped on to the trunk of a fallen tree, and grasping the overhanging branch of a young beech, was gazing steadfastly into the depths of the hollow that lay beneath; but he returned no answer.

"Hey, Ben! what ails ye, man! You don't rightly know where you are, I suspect," cried the farmer, looking impatiently around. "We are in the wrong hollow."

Still Ben Holick answered not a word; but, with a look of deathlike paleness, pointed, as though incapable of utterance, to a confused heap of poles and withered brushwood, in the midst of which the old man's practiced eye quickly discovered the rough, four-cornered, massive framework of a wolf-snares, such as were commonly used in the forest.

"Tis a cheat! a cheat, after all!" he cried, when a second glance had convinced him that it was empty. "This is really too much; and now, the sooner I am up the hill again the better."

But as he turned to climb the ridge, his eyes fell upon the wild and haggard countenance of the so late joyous hunter; and as he was about to ask what ailed him, the words—"It is empty!" broke in a hollow whisper from Ben's lips.

Farmer Sutton was alarmed, and quickly exclaimed: "Do you really mean to tell me that you left a wolf under that trap?"

"Under that trap?" repeated his dispirited companion, slowly and mournfully, as he stood gazing on the pitiless wreck of all his hopes of happiness.

"And you would really have me believe that?" growled the old man, as he nevertheless began to descend the slope, till he came over against the spot where the trap had been set. It was empty, indeed; but of one thing there was no longer any doubt—it had fallen. The flesh inside did not appear to have been touched; but there was a trace of scent, and, on further search, some white hairs adhering to one of the rough beams, that could have come only from the belly of a wolf. But what had become of him? That he could have worked his way out, under the heavy frame work, was impossible. Sutton stepped down and put his shoulder to lift it: he could scarcely raise it a foot.

While he was thus employed Benjamin joined him, and without speaking a word placed his rifle against a tree, threw the bell and collar beside it and stepping into the middle of the ruined heap, began carefully, but without disturbing anything, to examine the state of matters within.

"And you really had a live wolf there this morning?" repeated Sutton, after a pause, during which, in spite of the evidence of the hair and the scent, he had become confirmed in his belief.

"I give you my word of honor on it," said Ben, in a broken voice. "A stout he-wolf was sitting under the trap when I left this spot scarce an hour since; but the strength of three wolves would not have sufficed to move these beams and to make an opening through them; and even if they had, they must certainly have left at least half their skin on the rough bark."

"I think so too," said Sutton. "And you are fully persuaded that it was a wolf?"

"Now, hang it, man!" exclaimed the hunter, stung beyond endurance by disappointment, and now by the oft repeated suspicion of his truth, "do you think I don't know a wolf from a lamp of horse-flesh? but there! look in and convince yourself at last." As he spoke he suddenly jumped into the middle of the heap, and with one vigorous effort threw back the spring that covered the trap, as though it had been but a smiling lath, and swung himself with one leap to the bottom. "There! look!" he exclaimed, as he pointed to the humid surface. "Here! here! here! again, are the marks of the claws, since you will not take my word; here is the place where he drove in the spring as he was taking the bait; and here, it seems, is the spot where it fell. Would you have more proof, that it is a fact and not a lie that I'm telling you? Plague and poison! it is a vile trick that one of those skulking villains of the hamlet can never look me straight in the face, has played me. The wild beasts have been set free of wanton malice, and, by my right hand, the man who has thus shamefully laid his finger on Ben Holick's property, had better never see the banks of Washtah than

encounter my gaze, if once I trace the deed home to him."

"Humph," murmured the old man, "it's a wonderful story, certainly. Who should give himself the trouble to set a wolf loose just for the sake of springing you? And must he not have dogged your footsteps and been at your heels the whole night—or how should he have known the exact moment when he might set about his work with impunity?"

Ben made no reply, but climbed up the pit and began to search the wood for any indications that might put him on the right track; but the withered brushwood gave no signs; and he found nothing but a few hairs and the prints of his claws where the animal had made his first spring on emerging from the snare, whence he appeared to have made at once for his covert by the shortest cut across the hollow. There was no trace of human footsteps; the only thing that met the young man's eye was a couple of stones sunk to an unusual depth in the wet soil—notwithstanding which they were perfectly dry; he who had made use of them must then have passed over within a very short space of time.

Holick pointed out the stones to the old man, who confessed that it seemed to him also as though some person had passed that way; but that of course afforded no clue to any particular individual. From the crest of the ridge there was a track that passed in a straight line over the hill for about a mile, and then terminated abruptly in several rough stony declivities. It was exactly the spot that any one wishing to avoid pursuit would have selected; both saw at once that further search in this direction would be useless.

The negroes were sent back, and Sutton, in no very pleasant humor, followed. Holick remained to make further examination of the wood, and to explore the track which he imagined the stones to indicate, in the hope that some propitious turn might bring him—he stamped his foot fiercely as he thought of it—face to face with his treacherous enemy. He found nothing. The whole day was spent in crossing and recrossing the wood; and when he returned at evening weary and dispirited to the hamlet, he had to endure the condolence of the neighbors, and to minister to the curiosity which, under the guise of sympathy, eagerly craved the minutest details of the event. Metcalf especially was most friendly in offering his services to go over the track with him again. He had had, as he assured Sutton, great experience in tracking, and was convinced he should be able to discover some clue. Holick, however, considered himself, in this matter, as good a man as any that ever trod in moccasins, and courteously, but positively declined the offer.

There was something in Metcalf's look and voice, from which Ben Holick recoiled with instinctive aversion. Was it party bias and jealousy that inspired such groundless hatred of the man? was it not rather—

"God forgive me!" he exclaimed, "that I should think thus unkindly of a man, who, as far as I know, has never done me wrong; but this Metcalf ever comes across me as my evil spirit, and if there lives the man at whose door I would lay this devil's villainy, it is he. But beware! if it be thou, my master, thou hast a pair of as sharp eyes upon thee as any that are to be found in the hamlet; and who knows whether we may not yet have something to say to each other?"

Ben was a kindly, large-hearted fellow, and like most men of his gigantic mould, too well proportioned mentally, if we may be allowed the expression, to be easily put off the balance; but nevertheless, rage blanched his cheek to deadly paleness, as he now stood once more on the spot which had been the goal of all his hopes—so long struggling for—attained but to be dashed from his hand by the knavish malice of some masked villain.

But what ailed this impostor now? He found no trace whatever; and the wolf's marks were so craftily obliterated that Ben's suspicions began to waver. He could hardly give credit to the foolish citizen for so much adroitness; it would rather have been one of those of the young woodsmen who, as he well knew, envied his favor with Mabel, and had thus endeavored to deprive him of her hand. But all was mere surmise, and he saw no means of arriving at certainty.

What grieved him especially, too, was, that his best snare was for a while rendered useless; for until a heavy shower had obliterated every trace of the former captive, it was vain to think that any wolf would approach it, and there was no site so favorable as this.

Wolf Ben was not a man to be daunted by difficulties. He was still master of three traps, and here in the hollow, a little higher up, one of these might be set. This was accordingly done; for Ben set to work with all diligence, lay day and night in the woods, and kept so vigilant a watch that not a rabbit, much less a mortal man, could have stirred in the whole of his hunting circuit without attracting his attention. Full of fresh hopes, he awoke every morning with the expectation of finding a second wolf in his toils; but he was doomed to disappointment; his traps were set in vain; and at last Ben got so utterly dispirited that he avoided the hamlet entirely, slunning the presence of all men, and living alone in the deep seclusion of the forest. Still, one thought, one purpose, possessed him absolutely, and to this his energies were all bent—the capture of a live wolf.

If he had occasion to visit Woodville, it was by night, so as to avoid the possibility of encountering Mabel; for he had now come to regard himself as a dishonest hunter, and to believe that he was the object of general contempt. Three weeks had been passed in this manner, and if Ben Holick's heart was unchanged, things had assumed a very different aspect in the hamlet.

The city gentleman, as the young hunters of Woodville usually called him, received letters from Ben Holick requiring his immediate return. His uncle had died suddenly, leaving sole heir of a property which, as it consisted chiefly of slaves, called for his personal superintendence without delay. Time passed, and though his wooing had hitherto progressed

slowly enough, he now brought it to a crisis at once, and boldly proposed himself as the suitor of Mabel Sutton. On the very day of his receiving the letter, Mr. Metcalf made his offer, and although unconditionally rejected by Mabel, her father, to whom the prospect of so wealthy a son-in-law was particularly agreeable, did not scruple to give his positive assent, assuring the young man that "his daughter's refusal was but the expression of maiden bashfulness; that he must make up to her, and then all would be right."

Metcalf would fain have had a more favorable answer from the daughter, or at least one less expressive of aversion; but as things were he seemed at once to accommodate himself to them, and expressed a hope that he might be able, by kindness, to secure first her good will, and ultimately her affections—at least so he told her father; and fixed that very evening for a kind of *fete*, to which all the neighbors were invited, and which he desired might be regarded in the light of a betrothing.

Evening came, and the court-house was prepared for the occasion. It was a rough log erection, so called from its having been first used as a sessions-house. It had been promised to the villagers for a school, but was at present used as a storehouse for maize.

The large room was lighted with a profusion of candles, made from the bees-wax found by the hunters in the fallen trees; the floor had been carefully cleared of the maize-staw, benches were placed all around for the ladies; and in one corner was a table with a seat behind it, for the solitary musician, an old fiddler. Mabel was almost sad; she thought of her disconsolate lover, wandering alone in the neighboring woods, and felt no inclination to join the dance and the festivity. It was with difficulty that she was persuaded even to enter the dancing room, and no entreaties could prevail on her to mingle in the joyous circle.

But Benjamin Holick was not wondering in the wood, as Mabel supposed. Old Sutton as he himself avowed, had, when he found that none were to be excluded, given him a special invitation to the gathering. Ben, however, had declined to be present, though he resolved to be near at hand. Basy friends had brought him word that it was to be a betrothing feast; and he immediately determined to see with his own eyes, whether it could be true that Mabel had forsaken and forgotten him! If indeed it were so, then away for Texas! Uncle Sam was just entering on his first campaign, and a fellow like Ben—he needed no looking glass to tell him this—was not likely to have to ask twice for service under him. Cautiously, and fearful of being discovered, he stole round the house, listening for more than an hour to the merry tunes of the fiddler. He durst not venture near enough to cast one look within. After a while he saw a couple of his acquaintances leave the place and make for the very spot where he lay hidden, on their way home. He concealed himself as well as he could behind the stem of a hickory tree, and heard one say to the other, as they passed: "Well! Mabel Sutton never danced a step that I saw the whole evening."

"Not a step," rejoined the other; "and, moreover, she positively refused to dance at all, as soon as she came in. I don't believe she'll ever marry him."

Ben heard no more; the rest was lost in the distance; but, after all, what cared he to hear more?

"Not danced a step!" repeated Ben Holick, with exultation; then she is neither false nor faithless, and she has not forgotten Ben Holick; but what boots it? thou canst not help her, poor Ben!"

With these thoughts in his mind, he lifted the rifle, which he had left in a thick bush near, from the ground, and after casting one look at the brilliantly-lighted court-house, turned and took the path that led to the nearest ridge of the Washtah range. He could no longer endure the hamlet—least of all at night, and preferred sleeping by his watch-fire.

He soon selected a spot in a rocky hollow, just where a clear spring bubbled out of the ground; and kindling his fire and wrapping himself in his bear-skin, with a stone for his pillow, he lay deep in thought as he gazed upwards to the stars that seemed to shed a friendly light upon him.

An unmounted silence brooded over the forest—the very frogs croaked in whispers; the light tread of the opossum, the nightly robber of the village hen-roosts, was distinctly heard; further off, and now Ben raised his head and listened—it was indeed, a wolf howling his evening song in the hollow below. "Howl your fill, beast!" he cried, "only keep out of gun shot of me; and then Ben sank back on his stony pillow. "I have a special appetite for thy kind to-night—at least for one of ye!"

He lay thus on the watch for about half an hour, striving at the same time to force his thoughts into their former channel, but in vain; the howl of the wolf, coming nearer and nearer, absorbed all his attention; and now, impossible, but so, it was a nearer howl, in answer to the former, from a ravine behind the spot where Ben had made his bivouac, and where he soon discovered that the whole pack of wolves were assembled.

Ben now roused himself fully, sprang to his feet and felt for his rifle: the moon shone clear and bright above the dusky shadows of the distant mountain-chain; the hunter's spirit kindled within him, and banished all thoughts of other things. "Now for you, comrade!" he muttered between his teeth, as he seized his rifle, he took up his position behind a fallen tree: "only present yourself in the open space, and you shall rejoice in Ben Holick's rifle ball!"

He lifted his piece on to the tree—pointed it in what he supposed to be the direction of the beast's approach—giving no heed to the pack behind him, it being the well-known habit of wolves to keep the ground they have taken till joined by their stray comrades. He had not long to wait. As Ben stood listening with breathless attention for the slightest movement, he soon heard a quick but cautious tread resound among the withered leaves beneath a clump of trees near where he stood. Trip, trip, trip, trip, and the wolf made