

A BEAR HUNT.

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AROUND THE CAMP FIRE.

No. 11.



SHORT time after the supper had been disposed of, the tin cups and plates washed in the lake water, the boys had provided lots of wood for the camp fire, and had arranged themselves, sprawling around the roaring, crackling pile, the Professor proceeded to spin

the rest of his wonderful story.

I left off, I think, said he, where we had fought and killed the biggest bear of the three, and had hauled it to where the others had been left.

Well! as there was an hour still of daylight I set the Indians to pitching the tent and preparing supper, and as I had noticed the bluff bare rock near by had some large veins, I strolled away towards it, with a view to examine it for mineral deposits. I had found small quantities of that rare metal, Molybdenum, near by, and hoped to find a larger deposit, which it would pay to work. I had climbed well up the face of the bluff, my little partridge dog, Fanny, with me, when I noticed her very excitedly running up and down the trunk of a large dead tree, which had been blown down by some storm in times long past, its huge roots spread out and up, all around liked crooked spokes of some giant wheel. The trunk was fully five feet through at the root, and kept nearly that size for thirty or forty feet down the bluff. Near the root Fanny was smelling, and scratching about the edge of a large burnt black hole, five feet long and three feet across.

While I watched her, she gave a little yelp, and into the hole she went. This hastened me up to her assistance, and when I arrived at the tree I found that the trunk was hollow and smooth inside. Calling Fanny, I heard a faint response from her, away down the hole, that seemed to run quite a distance down. While examining the tree and hole, I noticed it had numerous scratches on it, evidently the marks of some large animal. I called, and called, and coaxed, and scolded the dog, to get her out, but she would just whimper and scratch. I then mounted the trunk, got over the hole, one hand on one side, and a knee on the opposite, and reached down the hole with my other hand, to encourage Fanny to come. I could hear her coming nearer, and stretched down my hand as far as I could with safety, hoping to catch her.

I had on a pair of moleskin breeches, and not thinking of the soaking they had got when the canoe capsized, which makes them very slippery, I made an extreme effort to reach my dog, when my knee slipped on the moistened edge of the hole, I lost my hold on the other side, was thrown in a bundle into the hole, and went

headlong down before I could reach for the edge of it, down, down, head first, vainly struggling with my fingers, feet, elbows, grasping anything to retard my descent, but down I went, five, ten, fifteen, twenty I don't know how many feet. It felt like a mile, till at last I plumped, head first, into my little dog. She jumped and frisked about in her delight—poor thing, never dreaming that it was she who had got me into such a fearful plight.

The bottom of this hole was filled with old broken dead ferns, bones, large and small, and it had such a strong smell of Bear, that I was convinced at once that I was in the very lair of those bears we had had such a fight with a few hours before. I sounded the sides, and gazed up at the light, which appeared about the size of a saucer. The walls were smooth of this tubular hole, and solid like a gun barrel, and I estimated the top to be more than twenty feet away.

It was some time before I could get turned comfortably around, collect my thoughts, and fully realize my position. There I was at the bottom of a twenty foot smooth black hole, with the night coming on, and no way of getting out except the way I had come in. I tried to climb up, but failed. I had laid my explorer's hammer, which is half hammer and half axe, on the tree beside the hole, or I could have chopped my way out in a few hours. The Indians would not trouble themselves much until after dark. There was no one to hear my voice if I yelled my head off, and nothing to eat, at which thought I felt very hungry, after the stirring events of the afternoon. No knife! What hope had I to get out even by the morning?

Gracious! should I ever get out? Should I starve to death? What *would* become of me? Then again I would try, and try, and struggle, and reach, and try my knees, and fingers, and toes, making desperate efforts to climb up those slippery sides. Again would I tumble back exhausted, to rest a little. Then, as the desperate thoughts would rise, again I renewed my frantic struggles, until at last my exertions, so prolonged and unusual, began to weaken me, aided by the heat of the confined air. I was sure I was going to die. Again I



AN HOUR OF EXPECTATION.