

everlastingly a gunning; and father would fret and scold, because whenever there was any work to do, Jack was always off in the woods. One day I started to go over Bear Mountain, about two miles from home, to see if I couldn't kill some raccoons; and I took my brother Ned, who was three years younger than myself, with me to help bring home the game. We took some bread and cheese and doughnuts in our pockets, for we calculated to be gone all day, and I shouldered my little fowling-piece, and took a plenty of powder and shot and small bullets, and off we started through the woods. When we got round the other side of Bear Mountain, where I had always had the best luck in hunting, it was about noon. On the way I had killed a couple of grey squirrels, a large fat raccoon, and a hedge-hog. We sat down under a large beech tree to eat our bread and cheese. As we sat eating, we looked up into the tree, and it was very full of beechnuts. They were about ripe, but there had not been frost enough to make them drop much from the tree. So says I to Ned, 'Let us take some sticks and climb this tree and beat off some nuts to carry home.' So we got some sticks, and up we went. We hadn't but jest got cleverly up into the body of the tree, before we heard something crackling among the bushes a few rods off. We looked and listened, and heard it again, louder and nearer. In a minute we see the bushes moving, not three rods off from the tree, and something black stirring about among them. Then out come an awful great black bear, the ugliest looking feller that ever I laid my eyes on. He looked up towards the tree we was on, and turned up his nose as though he was snuffing something. I began to feel pretty streaked; I knew bears was terrible climbers, and I'd a gin all the world if I'd only had my gun in my hand, well loaded. But there was no time to go down after it now, and I thought the only way was to keep as still as possible, and perhaps he might go off again about his business. So we didn't stir nor hardly breathe. Whether the old feller smelt us, or whether he was looking for beechnuts, I don't know; but he reared right up on his hind legs and walked as straight to the tree as a man could walk. He walked round the tree twice, and turned his great black nose up, and looked more like Old Nick than anything I ever see before. Then he stuck his sharp nails into the sides of the tree, and begun to hitch himself up. I felt as if we had got into a bad scrape, and wished we was out of it. Ned begun to cry. But, says I to Ned, 'It's no use to take on about it; if he's coming up we must fight him off the best way we can.' We climb'd up higher into the tree; and the old bear come hitching along up after us. I made Ned go up above me, and, as I had a pretty good club in my hand, I thought I might be able to keep the old feller down. He didn't seem to stop for the beechnuts, but kept climbing right up towards us. When he got up pretty near I poked my club at him, and he showed his teeth and growled. Says I, 'Ned, scabble up a little higher.' We climb up two or three limbs higher, and the old bear followed close after. When he got up so he could almost touch my feet, I thought it was time to begin to fight. So I up with my club and tried to fetch him a pelt over the nose. And the very first blow he knocked the club right out of my hand, with his great nigger paw, as easy as I could knock it out of the hand of a baby a year old. I begun to think then it was gone goose with us. However, I took Ned's club, and thought I'd try once more; but he knocked it out of my hand like a feather, and made another hitch and grabbed at my feet. We scrambled up the tree, and he after us, till we got almost to the top of the tree. At last I had to stop a little for Ned, and the old bear clinched my feet. First he stuck his claw into 'em and then he stuck his teeth into 'em, and begun to naw. I felt as if 'twas a gone case, but I kicked and fit, and told Ned to get up higher; and he did get up a little higher, and I got up a little higher too, and the old bear made another hitch and come up higher, and begun to naw my heels again. And then the top of the tree begun to bend, for we had got up so high we was all on a single limb as 'twere; and it bent a little more, and cracked and broke, and down we went, bear and all, about thirty feet, to the ground. At first I didn't know whether I was dead or alive. I guess we all lay still as much as a minute before we could make out to breathe. When I come to my feeling a little, I found the bear had fell on my lame leg, and give it

another most awful crushing. Ned wasn't hurt much. He fell on top of the bear, and the bear fell partly on me. Ned sprung off, and got out of the way of the bear; and in about a minute more the bear crawled up slowly on to his feet, and began to walk off, without taking any notice of us, and I was glad enough to see that he went rather lame. When I come to try my legs I found one of 'em was terribly smashed, and I couldn't walk a step on it. So I told Ned to hand me my gun, and to go home as fast as he could go, and get the horse and father, and come and carry me home.

"Ned went off upon the quick trot, as if he was after the doctor. But the blundering critter—Ned always was a great blunderer—lost his way and wandered about in the woods all night, and didn't get home till sunrise next morning. The way I spent the night wasn't very comfortable, I can tell ye. Jest before dark it begun to rain, and I looked round to try to find some kind of a shelter. At last I see a great tree, lying on the ground a little ways off, that seemed to be holler. I crawled along to it, and found there was a holler in one end large enough for me to creep into. So in I went, and in order to get entirely out of the way of the spattering of the rain, and keep myself dry, I crept in as much as ten feet. I laid there and rested myself as well as I could, though my leg pained me too much to sleep. Some time in the night, all at once, I heard a sort of rustling noise at the end of the log where I come in. My hair stood right on end. It was dark as Egypt; I couldn't see the least thing, but I could hear the rustling noise again, and it sounded as if it was coming into the log. I held my breath, but I could hear something breathing heavily, and there seemed to be a sort of scratching against the sides of the log, and it kept working along in towards me. I clinched my fowling-piece and held on to it. 'Twas well loaded with a brace of balls and some shot besides. But whether to fire, or what to do, I couldn't tell. I was sure there was some terrible critter in the log, and the rustling noise kept coming nearer and nearer to me. At last I heard a low kind of a growl. I thought if I was only dead and decently buried somewhere I should be glad; for to be eat up alive there by bears, or wolves, or catamounts, I couldn't bear the idea of it. In a minute more something made a horrible grab at my feet, and begun to naw 'em. At first I crawled a little further into the tree. But the critter was hold of my feet again in a minute, and I found it was no use for me to go in any farther. I didn't hardly dare to fire; for I thought if I didn't kill the critter, it would only be likely to make him fight the harder. And then again I thought if I should kill him and he should be as large as I fancied him to be, I should never be able to shove him out of the log, nor to get out by him. While I was having these thoughts the old feller was nawing and tearing my feet so bad, I found he would soon kill me if I laid still. So I took my gun and pointed down by my feet, as near the centre of the holler log as I could, and let drive. The report almost stunned me. But when I came to my hearing again, I laid still and listened. Everything round me was still as death; I couldn't hear the least sound. I crawled back a few inches towards the mouth of the log, and was stoppt by something against my feet. I pushed it. 'Twould give a little, but I couldn't move it. I got my hand down far enough to reach, and felt the fur and hair and ears of some terrible animal."

"That was an awful long night. And when the morning did come, the critter filled the holler up so much, there was but very little light come in where I was. I tried again to shove the animal towards the mouth of the log, but I found 'twas no use—I couldn't move him. At last the light come in so much that I felt pretty sure it was a monstrous great bear that I had killed. But I begun to feel as if I was buried alive; for I was afraid our folks wouldn't find me, and I was sure I never could get out myself. But about two hours after sunrise, all at once I thought I heard somebody holler 'Jack.' I listened and I heard it again, and I knew 'twas father's voice. I answered as loud as I could holler. They kept hollering, and I kept hollering. Sometimes they would go further off and sometimes come nearer. My voice sounded so queer they couldn't tell where it come from, nor what to make of it. At last, by going round considerable, they found my voice seemed to be some where round the holler tree, and bime-by father