

and this poor, decapitated stub was evidently hollow and rotten to the roots, for deeply scored upon its barkless sides were the signs of its being nothing more or less than a bear's den—the admirably chosen hiding-place of some sagacious Bruin.

My gun was loaded with an extra charge of powder and two good bullets. I put on a fresh cap, made sure everything was in good order, and took my stand a few yards off from the tree to await the result of Tiger's audacious challenge.

Minute after minute crept slowly by, but not a sound came from the tree. The tension of nerve was extreme.

At length I could stand it no longer. If the bear was really inside the tree-trunk, I must know it immediately.

Looking up, I noticed that an adjoining hemlock sent out a long arm right over the hollow trunk, while a little above was another branch by which I could steady myself.

Taking off my snow-shoes, and laying my gun at the hemlock's foot, I climbed quickly up, Tiger for a time suspending his barking in order to look inquiringly after me.

Reaching the branch, which seemed strong enough for anything, I walked out on it carefully, balancing myself by the one above, my moccasined feet giving me a good foothold, until I was right over the deep, mysterious cavity.

I peered eagerly in, but of course saw nothing save darkness as of Egypt, and, half laughing at my own folly,