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Smoky Days.

IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER V. IMPRISONED IN THE CAVE.

"I can go down there," thought Pete; "go down fast enough—that's sure."

He threw in a piece of driftwood. It stood on end and was out of sight in an instant.

"Should I get tore up?" thought Pete. "Or should I fall far enough to get smashed on the bottom? There's plenty of room—it's fifteen feet across at the funnel. But I guess I'd better explore all round before I risk my life in such a whirling hole."

He returned along the high tunnel to the main cave. Again he stopped at the fissure. His sense of imprisonment deepened as he turned from the vastness and gloom of the huge vault behind him to gaze at the free and flying clouds.

Inward draughts of air brought him the smell of freshly wet earth. Heavy rain slanted along, scurrying into mist on a rocky hillside opposite his jail. Poplar trees bent and swayed there under mighty gusts of wind.

As the boy thought of the burning woods and the parched country and his father's clearing, he blessed the Lord for the swift rain that his mother had prayed for so often. He could hear her, he fancied, as he fell into the reverie that such rain commonly gives—he could hear his mother's piteous prayer, as if the woe of it were compelling the rain.

Then he exulted in the fresh breeze and the drops that were blown to his face.

That joy vanished as he turned to the pouring echo of his prison. Now he could but hear the cascade, so dim had the cave become by the cessation of lightning and the darkening of the hole in the roof. Night was closing in upon the outer world, and uttermost darkness succeeded.

But Pete's fire burned hugely. After he had busied himself at the water's edge for half an hour he heaped up piles of driftwood by the light of the flame. Between the throwing down and going forth for more wood he stood listening and looking into the high portal of the south, or old, channel ravine.

Pete thought as the night went on that he heard again the sounds of wild animals that he had fancied before. Were fierce eyes glaring at him from the great pile of fallen rocks that had

barred him from escape? Were soft feet, sheathing cruel claws, coming silently toward him?

The night drew on toward dawn, and intenser darkness prevailed in the cave. At longer intervals thunder rattled through the cavern. The lightning that preceded might have revealed, to any eye looking down from the hole in the cave's gable, the figure of a boy sleeping in the space between four guardian fires that slowly waned to smouldering brands.

