

plexion, "between thirty and thirty-five." "I am not quite twenty-five," said Tom. "Wait till you hear my story."

"In New Westminster—it's a bustling little place now, since railway work began, but it was dull enough then—I picked up a chum, and we started off on a hunting and prospecting trip. It does not take long to get to the back of nowhere in that country if you strike away from the main lines of travel, and we were soon in the wilds. It was August, and the weather was simply glorious. Of course, we stuck to water travel. A greenhorn's outfit is altogether too big to be carried by a greenhorn, if two or three weeks' grub is thrown in for a makeweight. Harry had some little practice in paddling a canoe, and I soon picked up the trick, but you may imagine that our progress was not very rapid. The fifth day out found us sliding along the shore of one of those grand inlets or fjords which pierce the mountainous coast thereabouts for almost any distance inland; and just as we were debating how much farther we should go before camping for the night, we rounded a little point and found ourselves in the mouth of a small creek. Into this we turned, paddling silently along under the shadow of the young alders which lined the bank. At a slight signal from Harry, who was steering, I turned my head, and following the direction of his pointing finger, saw a black bear on the bank, about seventy yards ahead of us. My rifle was in my hand instantly, while Harry kept the canoe moving against the slight breeze by a silent motion of his paddle. So we crept on for about twenty yards, and then Harry stopped paddling and uttered a low 'now.' Ten seconds more and the bear had rolled over on the bank, and both of us were paddling as if a war canoe of Hydahs was after us. But when we reached the spot where the bear had been, and jumped ashore, no bear was to be seen. There was a very plain trail, with a gout of blood here and there, for a hundred yards or so, but after that the trail grew faint to our unpractised eyes and we were fain to turn back, badly disappointed boys. We determined, however, to camp where we were for the night, and renew the chase in the morning.

Behold us, then, shortly after sunrise next morning, our canoe having been cached among the bushes on the bank, starting off up the valley, each man with his rifle and blanket and grub for two or three days.

We saw no more of the bear—at least, I didn't; but just before dark we found ourselves in a curious little valley—a sort of natural amphitheatre, only, as Harry said, one half of it appeared to be cut off. Next morning showed us that the description was accurate. The circular wall of mountains, broken only by the narrow pass through which we had entered, seemed to enclose some six or seven hundred acres, but right across the centre ran a lower range of hills presenting, as far as we could see, a wall of abrupt cliffs. Along the foot of these we went, guided by the sound of rushing water, till we came to a beautiful fall—the source of the stream we had followed all the previous day. Just beyond this, the dividing range, or hog-back, as Harry called it, ran into the side of the main mountain, and down this another and higher fall rushed in a tossing sheet of foam. I declared that the higher fall carried more water than the lower, which seemed a continuation of it. Harry pooh-poohed the idea, and was eager to explore the valley for game. So we parted, agreeing to meet at the exit of the valley at sun-down, if we did not run across each other sooner. I never saw Harry again.

Slinging my rifle across my back, I started up the mountain side, finding the climbing easier than I had expected, and in about half an hour's time I stood at the foot of the higher fall—or at least as near it as it was possible to stand. Below me was a sunless chasm, in which the water boiled and swirled, seeming to rush around and around in a mad effort to find an exit, until it broke away over the lower fall. I was fascinated, as I leaned over the brink, and as I did so the crack of Harry's rifle sounded close and sharp, as if he had been standing beside me. I suppose the 'creepy' character of the place had weakened my nerves—at all events, I lost my balance and went headlong into the chasm. I don't know how many minutes the black horror lasted,