

ed dimly against the sea of drifting mist that crawled up the opposite hillside out of what seemed to be a fathomless hollow. Here and there a somber spire or ragged branch rose out of the vapor, and the roar of a river came up with a curious rhythmic cadence from very far below. Above, there were scarped slopes which even the sturdy pines could not climb, more mist trails, ragged cloud-banks, and odd blinks of towering snow.

As he sat quietly smoking, Sydney Jardine Carteret—Jardine was his mother's family name—gazed at it all with contemplative eyes. He had not been endued with the artistic temperament, but the savage, almost appalling, grandeur of the desolation in which he had spent the last two weeks had, as he would have expressed it, got hold of him. This was characteristic, for he generally used very simple colloquial English, and few of his friends credited him with the possession of many ideas. He was then about twenty-six years of age, and looked exactly what he was—a healthy, well-brought-up young Englishman, who hitherto had taken life somewhat easily.

Presently he took his pipe from his mouth, and indicated the mountains vaguely with the stem of it.

"Never saw anything quite like this," he declared. "Reminds one of Sutherland and Norway—been there fishing—and you get something of the same kind in the Tyrol; but they're somehow smaller and smoother. This gives you the idea of raw nature, and you can almost persuade yourself that nobody has ever been up here before. Anyway, you don't run up against a tourist at every corner. That last smashed forest was—tremendous."

It was the best word he could think of, and, feeling rather pleased with it, he replaced his pipe in his mouth. His thoughts, however, dwelt upon the scene of desolation that had taken him and his companions several