

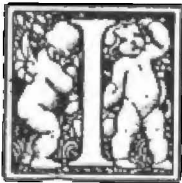
The CRYSTAL TRENCH

By

A. E. W. MASON.

Illustrated by G. Henry Evison.

I.



IT was late in the season, and for the best part of a week the weather had been disheartening. Even to-day, though there had been no rain since last night, the mists swirled in masses over a sunless valley green as spring, and the hill-sides ran with water. It pleased Dennis Challoner, however, to believe that better times were coming. He stood at a window of the Riffelalp Hotel, and imagined breaches in the dark canopy of cloud.

"Yes," he said, hopefully, "the weather is taking up."





He was speaking to a young girl whose name he did not know, a desultory acquaintance made during the twelve hours which he had passed at the hotel.

"I believe it is," she answered. She looked out of the window at two men who were sitting disconsolately on a bench. "Those are your men, aren't they? So you climb with guides!"

There was a note of deprecation in her voice quite unmistakable. She was trying not to show scorn, but the scorn was a little too strong for her. Challoner laughed.

"I do. With guides I can go where I like, when I like. I don't have to hunt for companions or make arrangements beforehand. I have climbed with the Blauers for five years now, and we know each other's ways."

He broke off, conscious that in her eyes he was making rather feeble excuses to cover his timidity and incompetence.

"I have no doubt you are quite right," she replied. There was a gentle indulgence in her voice, and a smile upon her lips which cried as plainly as words, "I could tell you something if I chose." But she was content to keep her triumphant secret to herself. She laid her hand upon the ledge of the window, and beat a little tattoo with her finger-tips, so that Challoner could not but look at them. When he looked he understood why she thus called his attention. She wore a wedding-ring.

Challoner was surprised. For she was just a tall slip of a girl. He put her age at nineteen or less. She was clear-eyed and pretty, with the tremendous confidence of one who looks out at life from the secure shelter of a school-room. Then, with too conscious an unconsciousness, she turned away, and Challoner saw no more of her that day.

But the hotel was still full, though most of

the climbers had gone, and in the garden looking over the valley of Zermatt, at six o'clock that evening, a commotion broke out about the big telescope. Challoner was discussing plans for the morrow with his guides by the parapet at the time, and the three men turned as one towards the centre of the clamour. A German tourist was gesticulating excitedly amidst a group of his compatriots. He broke through the group and came towards Challoner, beaming like a man with good news.

"You should see—through the telescope—since you climb. It is very interesting. But you must be quick, or the clouds will close in again."

"What do you mean?" Challoner asked.

"There, on the top of the Weisshorn, I saw two men."

"Now? At six o'clock in the evening—on a day of storm?" Challoner cried. "It's impossible."

"But I have seen them, I tell you."

Challoner turned and looked down and across the valley. The great curtain of cloud hung down in front of the hills like wool. The lower slopes of dark green met it, and on them the black pines marched up into the mist. Of rock and glacier and soaring snow not an inch was visible. But the tourist clung to his story.

"It is my first visit to the mountains. I was never free before, and I must go down to-morrow morning. I thought that even now I should never see them—all the time I have been here the weather has been terrible. But at the last moment I have had the good fortune. Oh, I am very pleased."

The enthusiasm of this middle-aged German business man, an enthusiasm childlike as it was sincere, did not surprise Challoner. He looked upon that as natural. But he doubted

the truth of the man's vision. He wanted so much to see that he saw.

"Tell me exactly what you saw," Challoner asked, and this was the story which the tourist told.

He was looking through the telescope when suddenly the clouds thinned, and through a film of vapour he saw, very far away and dimly, a soaring line of black like a jagged reef, and a great white slope more solid than the clouds, and holding light. He kept his eye to the lens, hoping with all his soul that the wonderful vision might be vouchsafed to him, and as he looked, the screen of vapour vanished, and he saw quite clearly the exquisite silver pyramid of the Weisshorn soaring up alone in the depths of a great cavern of grey cloud. For a little while he continued to watch, hoping for a ray of sunlight to complete a picture which he was never to forget, and then, to his amazement and delight, two men climbed suddenly into his vision on to the top of the peak. They came from the south or the south-west.

"By the Schalligrat!" exclaimed Challoner. "It's not possible!"

"Yes," the tourist protested. He was sure. There was no illusion at all. The two men did not halt for a second on the top. They crossed it, and began to descend the long ridge towards the Zermatt valley.

"I am sure," he continued. "One of the climbers, the one in front, was moving very slowly and uncertainly like a man in an extremity of weakness. The last was strong. I saw him lift the rope between them, which was slack, and shake the snow off it—"

"You saw that?" exclaimed Challoner. "What then?"

"Nothing. The clouds closed again over the peak, and I saw no more."

Challoner had listened to the story with a growing anxiety. He took the chair behind the telescope, and sat with his eye to the lens for a long while. But he saw only writhing mists in a failing light. He rose and moved away. There was no mountaineer that day in the hotel except himself. Not one of the group about the telescope quite understood the gravity of the story which had been told them—if it were true. But it could not be true, Challoner assured himself.

It was just possible, of course, that on a fine day some party which had adventured upon a new ascent might find itself on the top of the Weisshorn at six o'clock in the evening. But on a day like this no man in his senses would be on any ridge or face of

that mountain at all, even in the morning. Yet the tourist's story was circumstantial. That was the fact which troubled Challoner. The traverse of the Weisshorn from the Schallijoch, for instance, was one of the known difficult climbs of the Pennine Alps. There was that little detail, too, of the last man shaking the snow from the slack of the rope. But no doubt the tourist had read the year-books of the Austrian Alpine Club. Certainly he must have been mistaken. He wanted to see; therefore he saw. It was inconceivable that the story should be true.

Thus Challoner thought all through that evening and the next day. But as he left the dining-room the manageress met him with a grave face, and asked him into her office. She closed the door when he had entered the room, and said:—

"There has been an accident."

Challoner's thoughts flew back to the story of the tourist.

"On the Weisshorn?"

"Yes. It is terrible!" And the woman sat down, while the tears came into her eyes and ran down her cheeks.

Two young Englishmen, it appeared, Mark Frobisher and George Liston, had come up from the valley a week ago. They would not hear of guides. They had climbed from Wasdale Head and in the Snowdon range. The Alpine Club was a body of old fogies. They did not think much of the Alps.

"They were so young—boys! Mr. Frobisher brought a wife with him."

"A wife?" exclaimed Challoner.

"Yes. She was still younger than he was, and she spoke as he did—knowing nothing, but full of pride in her husband, and quite confident in his judgment. They were children—that is the truth—and very likely we might have persuaded them that they were wrong—if only Herr Ranks had not come, too, from Vienna about the same time."

Challoner began dimly to understand the tragedy which had happened. Ranks was well known amongst mountaineers. Forty years old, the right age for endurance, he was known for a passion for long expeditions undertaken with very small equipment; and for a rather dangerous indifference as to the companions he climbed with. He had at once proposed the Schalligrat ascent to the two Englishmen. They had gone down to Randa, slept the night there, and in bad weather had walked up to the Weisshorn hut, with provisions for three days. Nothing more had been heard of the party until this very afternoon, when Ranks and George

Liston, both exhausted and the latter terribly frost-bitten, staggered into the Randa hotel.

"That's terrible," said Challoner. But still more terrible was the story which the Austrian had to tell. He had written it out at once very briefly, and sent it up to the Riffelalp. The manageress handed the letter now to Challoner.

"We stayed in the hut two days," it ran, "hoping that the weather would lift. The next morning there were promising signs, and taking our blankets we crossed the Schalliberg glacier, and camped on the usual spur of the Schallihorn. We had very little food left, and I know now that we ought to have returned to Randa. But I did not think of the youth of my companions. It was very cold during the night, but no snow fell, and in the morning there was a gleam of sunshine. Accordingly we started, and reached the Schallijoch in four hours and a half. Under the top of the col we breakfasted, and then attacked the ridge. The going was very difficult; there was often a glaze of black ice upon the rocks, and as not one of us knew the ridge at all, we wasted much time in trying to traverse some of the bigger gendarmes on the western side, whereas they were only possible on the east. Moreover, the sunlight did not keep its promise: it went out altogether at half-past ten; the ridge became bitterly and dangerously cold, and soon after midday the wind rose. We dared not stop anywhere, and our food was now altogether exhausted. At two o'clock we found a shelter under a huge tower of red rock, and there we rested. Frobisher complained of exhaustion, and was clearly very weak. Liston was stronger, but not in a condition for a climb which I think must always be difficult and was now hazardous in the extreme. The cold had made him very sleepy. We called a council of war. But it was quite evident to me that we could not get down in the state in which we were, and that a night upon the ridge without food or drink was not to be thought of. I was certain that we were not very far from the top, and I persuaded my friends to go forward. I climbed up and over the red tower by a small winding crack in its face, and with great difficulty managed, by the help of the rope, to draw my friends up after me. But this one tower took more than an hour to cross, and on a little snow-col like a knife-edge on the farther side of it, Frobisher collapsed altogether. What with the cold and his exhaustion his heart gave out. I swear that

we stayed with him until he died—yes, I swear it—although the wind was very dangerous to the rest of us, and he was evidently dying. We stayed with him—yes. When all was over, I tied him by the waist with a piece of spare rope we carried to a splinter of rock which cropped out of the col, and went on with Liston. I did not think that we should either of us now escape, but the rock-towers upon the arête came to an end at last, and at six o'clock we stood on the mountain-top. Then we changed the order, Liston going now first down the easy eastern ridge. The snow was granulated and did not bind, and we made very slow progress. We stopped for the night at a height, I should think, of thirteen thousand feet, with very little protection from the wind. The cold was terrible, and I did not think that Liston would live through the night. But he did, and to-day there was sunlight, and warmth in the sunlight, so that moving very carefully we got down to the hut by midday. There, by a happy chance, we found some crusts and odds and ends of food which we had left behind; and after a rest were able to come on to Randa, getting some milk at the half-way chalet on the way down. Liston is frost-bitten in the feet and hands, but I think will be able to be moved down to the clinic at Lucerne in a couple of days. It is all my fault. Yes. I say that frankly. I alone am to blame. I take it all upon my shoulders. You can say so freely at the Riffelalp. 'Ranks takes all the blame.' I shall indeed write to-morrow to the Zurich papers to say that the fault is mine."

Challoner read the message through again. The assumption of magnanimity in the last few lines was singularly displeasing, and the eager assertion that the party had not left Frobisher until he was actually dead seemed to protest overmuch.

"That's a bad letter," said Challoner, but the manageress had no thoughts to spare for it.

"Who will tell her?" she asked, rocking her body to and fro, and fixing her troubled eyes on Challoner. "It is you. You are her countryman."

Challoner was startled.

"What do you mean?"

"He brought a wife with him."

"Frobisher?"

"Yes. They had only been married a couple of months. She is a year or two younger than he is—a child. Oh, and she was so proud of him. For my part I did not like him very much. I would not have

trusted him with the happiness of anyone I cared for. But she had given him all her heart. And now she must be told!"

"She is in the hotel now?" Challoner asked.

"Yes. You were talking to her yesterday."

Challoner did not need the answer.

"Very well. I will tell her." And he turned away, his heart sick at the task which lay before him. But before he had reached the door the woman called him back.

"Could we not give her just one more night of confidence and contentment? Nothing can be done until to-morrow. No one in the hotel knows but you and I. She will have sorrow enough. She need not begin to suffer before she must. Just one more night of quiet sleep."

So she pleaded, and Challoner clutched at the plea. He was twenty-six, and up to the moment life had hidden from him her stern ordeals. How should he break the news? He needed time carefully to prepare the way. He shrank from the vision of the pain which he must inflict.

"Yes, it can all wait until to-morrow," he said, and he went out of the office into the hall. There was a sound of music in the big drawing-room—a waltz, and the visitors were dancing to it. The noise jarred upon his ears, and he crossed towards the garden door in order to escape from it. But to reach the garden he had to pass the ballroom, and as he passed it he looked in, and the irony of the world shocked him so that he stood staring upon the company with a white face and open-mouthed. Frobisher's widow was dancing. She was dancing with all the supple grace of her nineteen years, her face flushed and smiling, whilst up there, fourteen thousand feet high on the storm-swept ridge of the Weisshorn, throughout that bitter night her dead husband bestrode the snow, and nodded and swayed to the gale. As she whirled past the door she saw him. She nodded and smiled with the pleasant friendliness of a girl who is perfectly happy, and with just a hint of condescension for the weaker vessel who climbed with guides. Challoner hurried out into the garden.

He went up to her room the next morning and broke the news to her as gently as he could. He was prepared for tears, for an overwhelming grief. But she showed him neither. She caught at an arm of a chair, and leaning upon it, seated herself when he began to speak. But after that she listened, frowning at him in a perplexity like a child over some difficult problem of her books. And when he had finished she drew a long breath.

"I don't know why you should try to frighten me," she said. "Of course, it is not true."

She would not believe—no, not even with Ranks's letter in her hand, at which she stared and stared as though it needed decoding.

"Perhaps I could read it if I were alone," she said at last, and Challoner left her to herself.

In an hour she sent for him again. Now indeed she knew, but she had no tears wherewith to ease her knowledge. Challoner saw upon her face such an expression of misery and torture as he hoped never to see again. She spoke with a submission which was very strange. It was only the fact of her youth, not her consciousness of it, which seemed to protest against her anguish as against an injustice.

"I was abrupt to you," she said. "I am sorry. You were kind to me. I did not understand. But I understand now, and there is something which I should like to ask you. You see, I do not know."

"Yes?"

"Would it be possible that he should be brought back to me?"

She had turned to the window, and she spoke low, and with a world of yearning in her voice.

"We will try."

"I should be so very grateful."

She had so desolate a look that Challoner made a promise of it, even though he knew well the rashness of the promise.

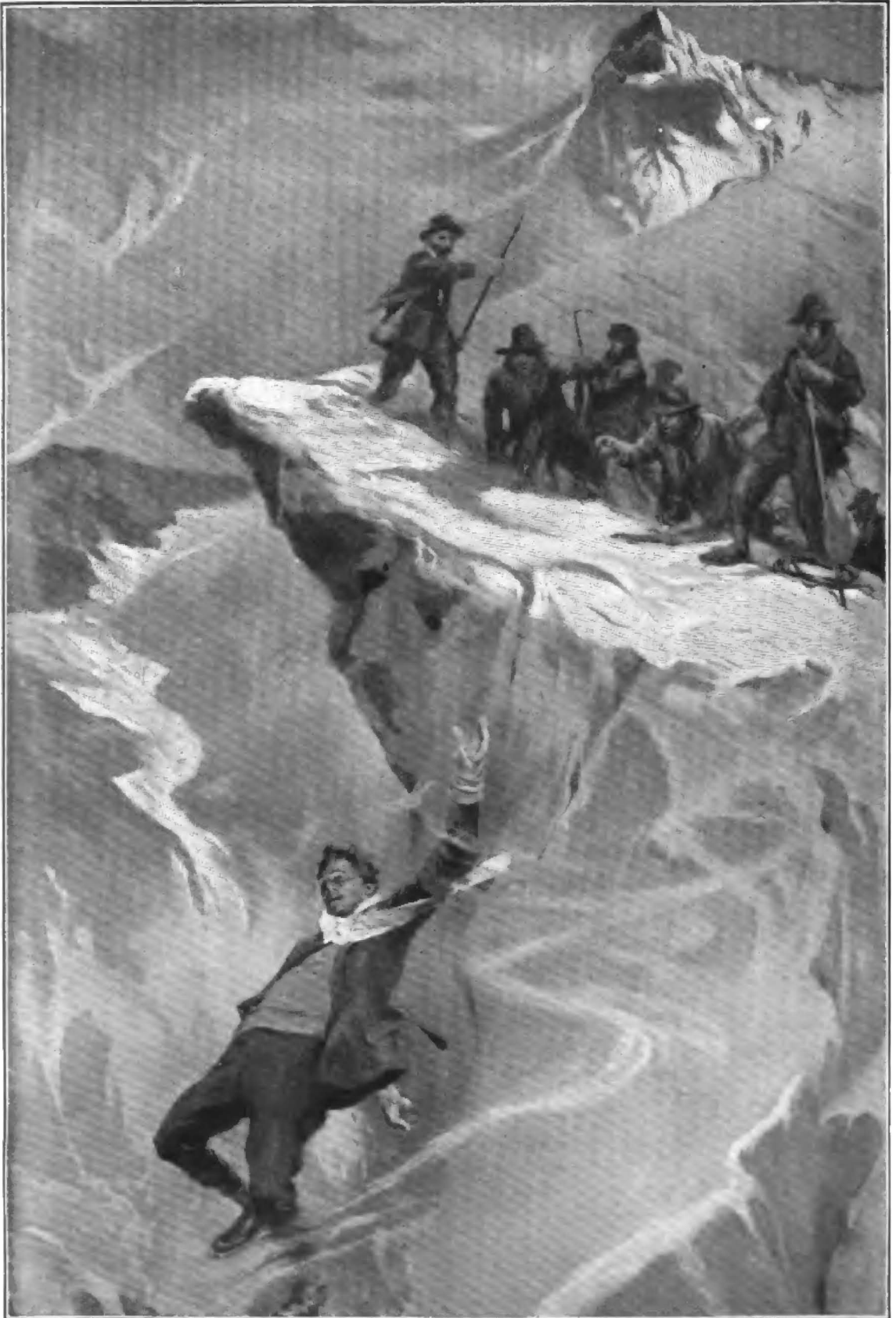
"You will go yourself?" she asked, turning her face to him.

"Of course."

"Thank you. I have no friends here, you see, but you."

Eight guides were collected that afternoon in the valley. Challoner brought down his two, and the whole party, under the guide-chief, moved up to the Weisshorn hut. Starting the next morning with a clear sky of starlight above their heads, they crossed the mountain by the eastern arête, and descending the Schalligrat, found young Frobisher tied by the waist and shoulders to a splinter of rock as Ranks had described. He was astride a narrow edge of snow, a leg dangling down each precipice. His eyes stared at them, his mouth hung open, and when any stray gust of wind struck the ridge, he nodded at them with a dreadful pleasantry. He had the air, to Challoner's eyes, of a live paralytic rather than of a man frozen and dead. His face was the colour of cheese.

With infinite trouble they lifted him back



"A CRY OF HORROR BROKE FROM THE RESCUE PARTY."

on to the mountain summit, and roped him round in a piece of stout sacking. Then they dragged him down the snow of the upper part of the ridge, carried him over the lower section of rock, and, turning off the ridge to the right, brought him down to the glacier.

It was then three o'clock in the afternoon, and half an hour later the grimmest episode of all that terrible day occurred. The lashing of the rope got loose as they dragged the body down the glacier, and suddenly it worked out of the sacking and slid swiftly past them down a steep slope of ice. A cry of horror broke from the rescue party. For a moment or two they watched it helplessly as it gathered speed and leapt into the air from one little hummock to another, the arms tossing and whirling like the arms of a man taken off his guard. Then it disappeared with a crash into a crevasse, and the glacier was empty.

The party stood for a little while aghast, and the illusion which had seized upon Challoner when he had first come in sight of the red rock-tower on the other ridge attacked him again. He could not get it out of his thoughts that this was a living man who had disappeared from their gaze, so natural had all his movements been.

The party descended to the lip of the crevasse, and a guide was lowered into it. But he could not reach the bottom, and they drew him up again.

"That is his grave," said Joseph Blauer, solemnly; and they turned away again and descended to Randa.

"How shall I meet that girl?" Challoner asked himself, in a passion of remorse. It seemed to him that he had betrayed a trust, and the sum of treachery deepened in him when he did tell it that night at the Riffelalp. For tears had their way with her at last. She buried her face in her arms upon the table, and sobbed as though her heart would burst.

"I had so hoped that you would bring him back to me," she said. "I cannot bear to think of him lying for ever in that loneliness of ice."

"I am very sorry," Challoner stammered, and she was silent. "You have friends coming out to you?" he asked.

"Yes."

He went down into the hall, and a man whose face he remembered came eagerly towards him. Challoner was able to identify him the next moment. For the man cried out:—

"It is done. Yes, it is in all the Zurich papers. I have said that I alone am to

blame. I have taken the whole responsibility upon my shoulders." Herr Ranks brimmed with magnanimity.

II.

TOWARDS Christmas of that year Challoner, at his chambers in the Temple, received a letter in an unfamiliar hand. It came from Mrs. Frobisher. It was a letter of apology. She had run away into hiding with her sorrow, and only during the last weeks had she grown conscious of the trouble which Challoner had taken for her. She had quite forgotten to thank him, but she did so now, though the thanks were over-late. Challoner was very glad to receive the letter. From the day when he had seen her off from the new station in the valley, he had lost sight of her altogether, but the recollection of her pale and wistful face at the carriage window had haunted him. With just that look, he had thought, might some exile leave behind every treasured thing and depart upon a long journey into perpetual banishment. This letter, however, had a hint, a perfume of spring-time. Stella Frobisher—by that name she signed—was beginning to recreate her life.

Challoner took a note of her address, and travelled into Dorsetshire on the Saturday. Stella Frobisher lived in a long and ancient house, half farm, half mansion, set apart in a rich country close to Arishmell Cove. Through a doorway one looked into a garden behind the house which even at that season was bright with flowers. She lived with the roar of the waves upon the shingle in her ears and the gorse-strewn downs before her eyes. Challoner had found a warm and cheerful welcome at that house, and came back again to it. Stella Frobisher neither played the hermit nor made a luxury out of her calamitous loss. She rebuilt her little world as well as she could, bearing herself with pride and courage. Challoner could not but admire her; he began to be troubled by what seemed to him the sterility of a valuable life. He could not but see that she looked forward to his visits. Other emotions were roused in him, and on one morning of summer, with the sea blue at her feet and the gorse a golden flame about her, he asked her to marry him.

Stella Frobisher's face grew very grave.

"I am afraid that's impossible," she said, slowly, a little to his surprise and a great deal to his chagrin. Perhaps she noticed the chagrin, for she continued quickly. "I shall tell you why. Do you know Professor Kersley?"

Challoner looked at her with astonishment.

"I have met him in the Alps."

Stella Frobisher nodded. "He is supposed to know more than anyone else about the movements of glaciers."

Dimly Challoner began to understand, and he was startled.

"Yes," he answered.

"I went to call on him at Cambridge. He was very civil. I told him about the accident on the Weisshorn. He promised to make a calculation. He took a great deal of trouble. He sent for me again and told me the month and the year. He even named a week, and a day in the week." So far she had spoken quite slowly and calmly. Now, however, her voice broke, and she looked away. "On July 21st, twenty-four years from now, Mark will come out of the ice at the snout of the Hohlicht glacier."

Challoner did not dispute the prophecy. Computations of the kind had been made before with extraordinary truth.

"But you won't wait till then?" he cried, in protest.

For a little while she found it difficult to speak. Her thoughts were very far away from that shining sea and homely turf.

"Yes," she said at last, in a whisper; "I am dedicated to that as a nun to her service." And against that dead man wrapped in ice, his unconquerable rival, Challoner strove in vain.

"So you must look elsewhere," Stella said. "You must not waste your life. I am not wasting mine. I live for an hour which will come."

"I am in too deep, I am afraid, to look elsewhere," said Challoner, gloomily. Stella Frobisher looked at him with a smile of humour playing about her mouth.

"I should like to feel sorry about that," she said. "But I am not noble, and I can't."

They went together down to the house, and she said: "However, you are young. Many things will happen to you. You will change."

But as a matter of fact he did not. He wanted this particular woman, and not another. He cursed himself considerably for his folly in not making sure, when the rescue party got down from the rocks on to the glacier, that the rope about the sacking was not working loose. But such reproaches did not help forward his suit. And the years slipped away, each one a trifle more swiftly than that which had gone before. But in the press of a rising practice he hardly noticed their passage. From time to time Stella Frobisher came to town, sat in the Law Courts while

he argued, was taken to shop in Bond Street, and entertained at theatres. Upon one such visit they motored—for motors had come now—on an evening in June down the Portsmouth road, and dined at the inn at Ockham. On their way she said, simply:—

"It is the year."

"I know," replied Challoner. "Shall I come with you?"

She caught his hand tightly for a moment.

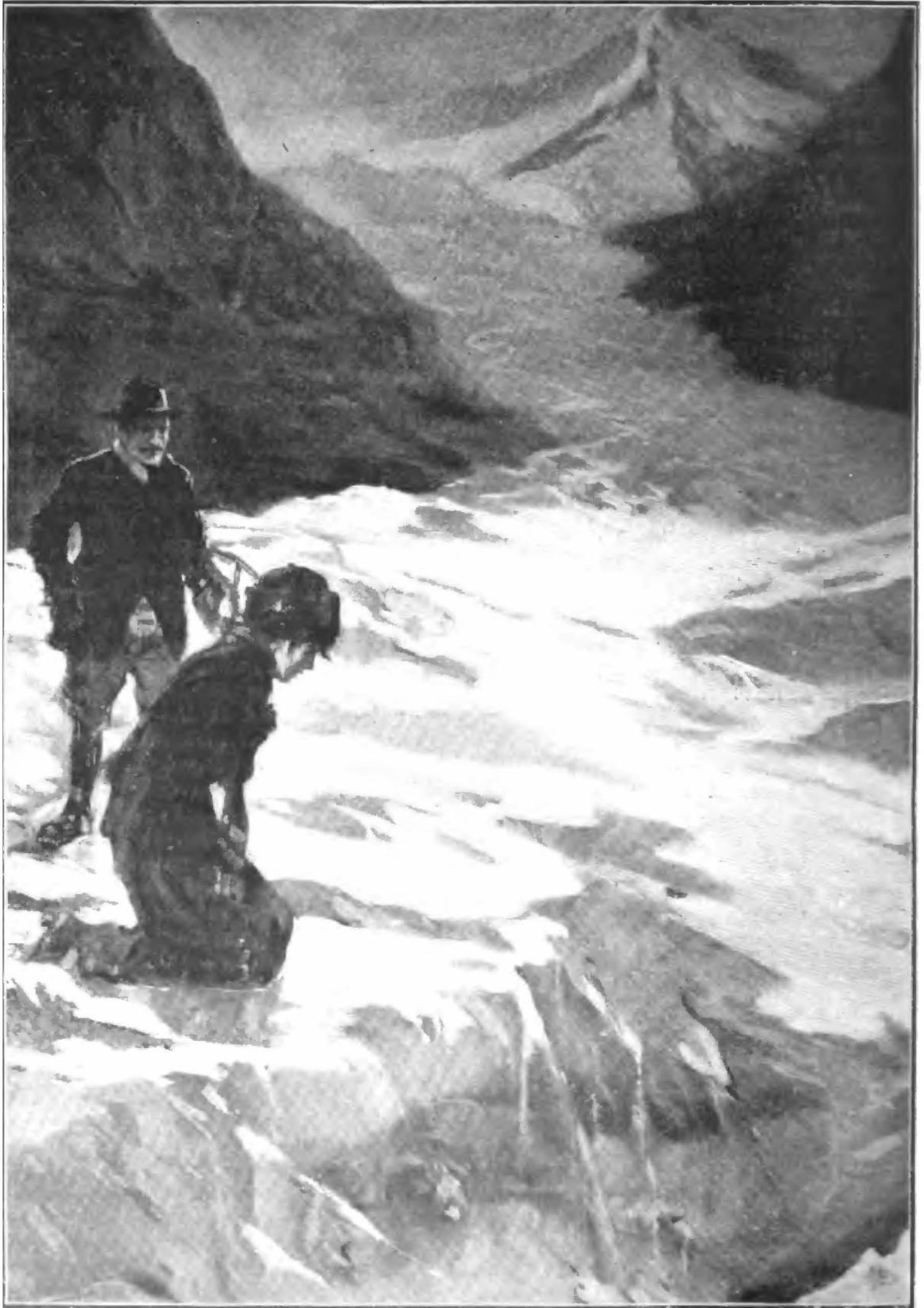
"Oh, if you could! I am a little afraid—now."

He took her out to Randa. There were many changes in the valley. New hotels had sprung up; a railway climbed nowadays to the Riffelalp; the tourists came in hundreds instead of tens; the mountains were overrun. But Challoner's eyes were closed to the changes. He went up through the cleft of the hills to where the glaciers come down from the Weisshorn and the Schallijoch and the Moming Pass; and as July drew on, he pitched a camp there, and stood on guard like a sentinel.

There came a morning when, coming out of his tent on to a knoll of grass, he saw below him on the white surface of the glacier, and not very far away, something small and black.

"It's a pebble, no doubt," he thought, but he took his axe and climbed down on to the ice. As he approached the object the surer he became. It was a round pebble, polished black and smooth by the friction of the ice. He almost turned back. But it was near, and he went on. Then a ray of sunlight shot down the valley, and the thing flickered. Challoner stooped over it curiously and picked it up. It was a gold watch, lying with its dial against the ice, and its case blackened save for a spot or two where it shone. The glass was missing and the hands broken, and it had stopped. Challoner opened it at the back; the tiny wheels, the coil of the mainspring, were as bright as on the day when the watch was sold. It might have been dropped there out of a pocket a day or two ago. But ice has its whims and vagaries. Here it will grind to powder, there it will encase and preserve. The watch might have come out of the ice during this past night. Was the glacier indeed giving up its secrets?

Challoner held the watch in his hand, gazing out with blind eyes over the empty, silent world of rock and ice. The feel of it was magical. It was as though he gazed into the sorcerer's pot of ink, so vivid and near were those vanished days at the Riffelalp and the dreadful quest in the silver peak now soaring high above his head. He continued his search



"UNDER THE ICE MARK FROBISHER LAY QUIETLY, LIKE A YOUTH ASLEEP."

that morning. Late in the afternoon he burst into the hotel at Randa. Stella Frobisher drew him away into the garden, where they were alone. He gave the watch into her hands, and she clasped it swiftly against her heart with an unearthly look of exaltation upon her face.

"It is his?" asked Challoner.

"Yes. I will go up."

Challoner looked at her doubtfully. He had been prepared to refuse her plea, but he had seen, and having seen, he consented.

"To-morrow—early. Trust me. That will be time enough."

He collected porters that evening, and at daybreak they walked out from the chalets and up the bank of the glacier, left the porters by his tent, and he led her alone across the glacier and stopped.

"Here," he said. In front of her the glacier spread out like a vast fan within the cup of the hills, but it was empty.

"Where?" she asked, in a whisper, and Challoner looked at her out of troubled eyes, and did not answer. Then she looked down, and at her feet just below the surface of the glacier, as under a thick sheet of crystal, she saw after all these years Mark Frobisher. She dropped on her knees with a loud cry, and to Challoner the truth about all these years came home with a dreadful shock.

Under the ice Mark Frobisher lay quietly, like a youth asleep. The twenty-four years had cut not a line about his mouth, not a wrinkle about his eyes. The glacier had used him even more tenderly than it had used his watch. The years had taken no toll of him. He was as young, his features were as clear and handsome, as on the day when he had set out upon his tragic expedition. And over him bent his wife, a woman worn, lined, old. For the first time Challoner realized that all her youth had long since gone, and he understood for the first time that, as it was with her, so, too, it was with him. Often enough he had said, "Oh, yes, I am getting on. The years are passing." But he had used the words with a laugh, deferring to convention by the utterance of the proper mean-

ingless thing. Now he understood the meaningless thing meant the best part of everything. Stella Frobisher and he were just a couple of old people, and their good years had all been wasted.

He gently raised Stella Frobisher to her feet.

"Will you stand aside for a little?" he said. "I will call you."

She moved obediently a few yards away, and Challoner summoned the porters. Very carefully they cut the ice away. Then he called aloud:—

"Stella!" And she returned.

There was no sheet of ice between them now; the young man and the worn woman who had spent their youth together met thus at last. But the meeting was as brief as a spark.

The airs of heaven beat upon Mark Frobisher, and suddenly his face seemed to quiver and his features to be obscured. Stella uttered a scream of terror, and covered her face with her hands. For from head to foot the youth crumbled into dust and was not. And some small trifle tinkled on the ice with a metallic sound.

Challoner saw it shining at the bottom of the shallow trench of ice. It was a gold locket on a thin chain. It was still quite bright, for it had been worn round the neck and under the clothes. Challoner stooped and picked it up and opened it. A face stared boldly out at him, the face of a girl, pretty and quite vulgar, and quite strange to him. A forgotten saying took shape slowly in his memory. What was it that the woman who had managed the hotel at the Riffelalp had said to him of Frobisher?

"I did not like him. I should not trust him."

He looked up to see Stella Frobisher watching him with a white face and brooding eyes.

"What is that?" she asked.

Challoner shut the locket.

"A portrait of you," he said, hastily.

"He had no locket with a portrait of me," said Stella Frobisher.

Over the shoulder of a hill the sun leapt into the sky and flooded the world with gold.