

member rightly only about 9 ins. wide and overhanging above, and you only get along on your knees and stomach and elbows, and it was all one could do not to fall off. From memory I should say it was 12 or 15 ft., and the man on the point at the top of the crack holding your rope was only a little above you, and couldn't have prevented a nasty fall. Whether this was Hans Almer's route I don't know; he *may* have traversed higher up. I know of no photograph showing the inside of the bottom of the chimney.'

Thus ends an interesting chapter.

AN EXTRAORDINARY ESCAPE.

By E. L. STRUTT.

THE scene is high up on the S.W. slopes of what is called (Piz) 'Grialetsch,' 2698 m., in the Fexthal. The date is December 29, 1926. The tale, describing a miraculous escape from death, is intended to point a moral. It should be read in conjunction with 'A.J.' 37, 160-7. An absurdly garbled version has appeared in the 'cheap' Press. The writer apologizes for the constant use of the personal pronoun; under the circumstances this is inevitable.

Despite a high temperature (30° F.), signs of Foehn and a lowering sky, a party consisting of four persons—Miss Lindisfarne Hamilton, an English girl of nineteen; Mr. Patrick Hamilton, her younger brother; Mr. Christopher Hussey, a young Englishman, and myself—determined to start on an attempt to ascend the above summit. There was really nothing imprudent in this proceeding. The ascent does not present the slightest difficulty, and a quick return, should bad weather occur, could (or should) be easily accomplished. I had made the winter ascent on several previous occasions, and Miss Hamilton and her brother, both admirable walkers, had accompanied me. Hussey was an unknown quantity, but proved quite efficient. Miss Hamilton was provided with an ice-axe, Hamilton and Hussey had only ski-sticks, but all three were properly equipped in other respects. I was carrying all the *impedimenta* of the party, and decided at the last moment that a rope was not necessary and it was accordingly left behind.

Leaving the Hôtel Waldhaus, Sils-Maria, at 09.45, the party began the ascent proper at 10.30. We were all wearing ordinary climbing boots, ski or raquettes being of no use under the conditions then obtaining—an inch or two of fresh powdery snow resting on older, mostly wind-blown, beds. Bearing straight up N.E., the snow becoming ever harder, we reached the foot of a precipitous rocky cliff, almost completely covered with a frozen waterfall. To the right (S.) was a broad snow-gully, and farther to the right again a continuation of the same line of cliffs, which extend for some 500 yards towards the S. These cliffs are in general quite vertical, or even overhanging, and are about 300 ft. high. The snow-gully separates the cliffs into two distinct portions.

The party crossed the snow-gully and then worked up its true left bank, I being occasionally obliged to cut steps in hard snow which alternated with soft drifts. As soon as a sufficient height above the line of cliffs had been gained,¹ we traversed still more to the S. over gentle convex slopes of some 25°–30°, and then turned straight up (N.E.) towards a kind of broad ridge forming the S. buttress of a lower peak of the desired summit. Along this buttress (N.), swept almost dry by the wind, the lower peak, perhaps 8000 ft., was very easily attained.

It was 12.00, and snow was beginning to fall gently. The temperature was about, or above, freezing, the valley being still perfectly visible. It was decided to take lunch and then return. At 12.30, just as the party was packing up, the weather, without any warning, changed completely. A regular blizzard set in from the N.E., the visibility was reduced to a few yards, and the party was almost blinded by whirling masses of snow. We started down in the following order: myself, Miss Hamilton, Hamilton, Hussey. The leader was able to steer a pretty good line down our route of ascent, but all tracks had, of course, completely vanished. I experienced some difficulty in keeping our party together, and Hussey was completely invisible in the storm, although only a few yards distant. The traverse above the line of cliffs, some 500 ft. below, was safely reached, and here the full fury of the gale met us, straight in our teeth. My dominant idea was to bring the party to a more sheltered spot. I hurried, accordingly, at express speed, without cutting steps, over the above-described slopes (of some 25°–30°), in a descending

¹ The party could have continued straight up the gully but I, no doubt rightly, considered the possibility of a slab avalanche occurring.

traverse. I again closed the party up. Miss Hamilton, closely following me, was going perfectly, using her axe like an accomplished mountaineer: the remainder of the party were barely visible. Suddenly, a shout from Hamilton informed us that Hussey had slipped on the traverse and disappeared. There was nothing to do except to continue, and, as I turned to do so, a short exclamation from Hamilton was followed by a prolonged slip on his part. For a few yards he struggled gamely, driving the point of his stick into the hard snow. Twice did he almost succeed in stopping, and then, losing all control, vanished, on his side, into the swirling abyss of storm clouds. . . . Again, there was nothing to do, and I had to continue down with Miss Hamilton alone. That lady, who had just seen her brother disappear before her eyes, kept her head and followed calmly and carefully in the steps that I had at last found it necessary to cut. We crossed into the gully separating the two lines of cliffs and descended it rapidly, half-buried in masses of soft snow. Below the cliffs I led Miss Hamilton to the lower gentle slopes, where I bade her descend to the valley alone, to send up help. She obeyed without remonstrance. The air was clearing, and I turned to the S., traversing far below the long lines of cliffs, until I reached a spot, in my judgment, immediately below their centre. I then turned straight up and fought my way through deep snow, towards the base of the cliffs. . . . It was the worst moment of my Alpine career. Well I knew that there could be no hope, short of a miracle, of finding my companions alive. They must have slid over some 300 ft. of very hard snow, followed by a sheer drop of 300 ft. over the pitiless rampart. Yet, the miracle had happened; I heard a shout quite close to me, and suddenly perceived the figure of Hamilton standing up in front. That boy, barely recovered from the fall, had already made his way to where his stick had lodged above, and then, alone, semi-conscious, with his left arm broken in two places, had reached the spot where Hussey was lying, apparently dead, some 80 yards farther to the S. Hamilton directed me to the place, saying, 'I am all right, but Hussey is dead, or dying.' Telling him to wait (Hamilton, after finding Hussey and shouting for help, was working his way downwards with that purpose in view), I soon reached Hussey; he was lying in a deep drift, between jagged rocks, feet foremost, pointing valleywards. As I reached him, Hussey sat up and began babbling semi-incoherently. The storm was clearing, and the floor of the Fexthal became visible (14.30). I had taken about an hour from the time of the

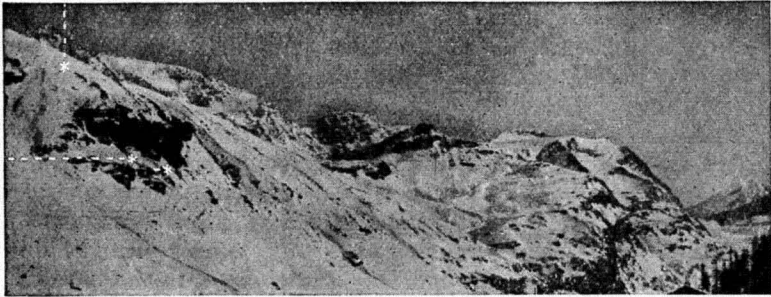
accident to reach the final scene of the fall. Several figures could be seen below just starting upwards. They were a party sent up by Miss Hamilton.

Little remains to be told. I contrived to get Hussey a considerable distance down, Hamilton having, on instructions, preceded us. The Swiss party,² assisted by some British skiers, then skilfully and quickly transported the now almost unconscious Hussey to a sleigh. By 16.00, Hussey and Hamilton had been convoyed by Miss Hamilton to the hotel. I followed on foot and alone.

It was not, unhappily, the first accident that I had been involved in. I realized, and had done so from the first, that I,

* is place of slip.

•• places where falls ended.



S.W. FACE OF GRIALETSCHE AND FEXTHAL.

and I alone, was really responsible for the fall. I had committed a series of unpardonable mistakes. First, I had started for a winter climb in doubtful weather; secondly, I was—when accompanying an inexperienced party—without a rope, and, worst of all, I had hurried them, stepless, across a slope, where a slip was, humanly, bound to prove fatal. It was no excuse that under average winter conditions the slope, where the slip occurred, is a mere walk, and that even under the actual conditions, steps were not necessary for myself. The storm was undoubtedly an important factor; yet I cannot exonerate myself from most of the blame. Providence had averted disaster in a place where the odds were a thousand to one in favour of death. If any doubt could remain, one look at the cliff would convince the most utter sceptic. Hamilton and Hussey had

² My warmest thanks are due to Herr Fümme and the Messrs. Max Muller and Donner—the second an Eton boy.

fallen about 600 ft., of which the last 300 ft. were absolutely perpendicular, nay, overhanging. Each had landed on small deep drifts between projecting boulders, and, most miraculous of all, neither had fallen on his head. The impetus of the slip had caused them to clear the base of the cliff by many yards.

Hamilton had no injuries except for his badly broken arm. Hussey was suffering from concussion and severe bruises. In neither case were their clothes even torn.

Both have now quite recovered.

The humiliation to myself is everlasting; my admiration of my companions eternal.

THE THIRD MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

An Austrian Criticism.

COLONEL NORTON'S volume entitled 'The Fight for Everest, 1924,' has been translated into German by Herr Rickmers and published at Basel under a distorted and inaccurate title, *Bis zur Spitze des Mount Everest. Die Besteigung.*

We have before us an able and, on the whole, sympathetic review of this volume, printed in the *Ö.A.Z.* xlix. 1-4, from the pen of Dr. G. Lammer, formerly famous for his mountaineering exploits and lately well known as 'the most terrible of all Alpine critics.' The opinions of such an expert are worthy of careful consideration, and we think it may be well, therefore, to cite from his review a crucial passage for more particular study. In dealing with the last fatal and immortal attempt, Dr. Lammer expresses himself as follows:

' . . . But Mallory had recovered from his bad throat and was blazing with energy for the summit. For this last attempt he chose Irvine as his companion, which caused grave misgivings to Norton. I consider that this choice of Mallory's proved to be his undoing. Why did he select this 22-year-old athlete and oarsman, who had so far accomplished no mountaineering expeditions worthy of mention and who was suffering from throat trouble? Chomo Lungma as a first expedition, what an outrage! And yet there was available the very experienced Odell, who had brilliantly passed the altitude test. Mallory was anxious, so as to make certain of a result