

# The tragedy of the Eiger [ to be continued]

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He said by virtue of their great vitality the Spaniards managed in former times to extract themselves from similar situations and in a not too distant future Spain would start building up for herself a new prosperity; that the sun had not set on Spain but that it was the beginning of a new and glorious sunrise.

Vociferous cheers concluded the lecture. Several questions were asked which the lecturer answered in a masterly manner. The President expressed the Society's cordial thanks to Professor Peers and this concluded an evening "par excellence."

W.B.

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE EIGER.

By C. F. MEADE.  
The Field.

One of the most deplorable of Alpine accidents which have occurred this year was the disaster which befell the climbers who attempted to ascend the north face of the Eiger. It ranked as such if only on account of the infatuated rashness of the young men who laid down their lives so needlessly in carrying out this desperate enterprise. The story of the persistent attempts at rescue made by heroic guides deserves telling.

The four assailants of the Eiger left the Kleine Scheidegg on Saturday, July 18th. Two were Austrian and two Bavarian. One of the latter had already had a fall of 120ft. during a preliminary reconnaissance in which he owed his immunity merely to chance and to the excellence of his rope. (The party were competing for the Olympic medal awarded for the most important feat of climbing during the year.)

On the first day, a Saturday, they made rapid progress in spite of the bad weather, which caused streams of snow and water to flow down the face. They succeeded in circumventing the formidable cliff named the Rote Fluh, which was overhanging, glazed with ice and swept with falling stones. They passed the night at a height of about 10,500 ft.

Next day, Sunday, during a momentary break in the bad weather, they were observed through telescopes from Grindelwald ascending an ice-slope and securing themselves to a *piton* (a ringed metal peg hammered into the rock). On Monday, also, they were observed, at first advancing and subsequently descending. They had reached a height of nearly 11,000ft. before turning back. It was almost identically the point reached by the two Germans who perished in the attempt of 1935. Again, on Tuesday, the fourth day of the fatal journey, they were seen halted, one of them apparently with a head wound. They were attempting unsuccessfully to return by reascending the rocks which they had descended with the help of *pitons* when circumventing the Rote Fluh.

Meanwhile a railway ganger had heard their cries for help and seen them through an opening in the wall of the tunnel of the Jungfrauoch Railway that ascends inside the Eiger. He gave the alarm, and four guides arrived by special train — Adolf and Christian Rubi, Hans Schlunegger and Arnold Glatthard — all men in the very front rank of their profession. The four of them at once climbed out through the opening in the wall of the tunnel, and began the desperate task of traversing the face of the precipice to get to the four climbers.

As the latter found it impossible to climb up the rocks that they had descended at the Rote Fluh on their way up, the only alternative was to fix a rope and swarm straight down it over the overhanging precipice. The first man attempted to do this, but found that there was not enough rope for the purpose, so the second man, above him, had to take off the rope in order to pay out more of it. In doing this he slipped and fell into the terrible depths of the precipice overlooking Grindelwald.

Some loose coils of the rope, dislodged by his fall, lashed themselves like a whip round the second man and instantly strangled him, at the same time hurling the third man against the rock and mortally injuring him. A youth called Kurz was the sole survivor, and shouted down to the guides that he was now alone, linked to two dead companions, and with one arm useless from frost-bite. Volleys of stones and masses of snow raked the precipice repeatedly. Glatthard narrowly escaped destruction, and the guides crept on towards the precipice to which Kurz was clinging, but now night came on, and they were obliged to retreat, Kurz declaring that he could not hold out for another day.

On Wednesday, the fifth day, the guides recommenced the struggle, but it had become evident that Kurz was too far up for them to reach, so he was asked to try to use his axe to free himself from the rope linking him to the dead body nearest to him. With incredible fortitude and perseverance he eventually succeeded, and the body narrowly missed sweeping the guides down with it in its flight into the abyss. Then three terrible hours passed while the crippled Kurz heroically contrived to knot the ends of the rope

and lower it to the guides so that he could draw up pitons and implements which he could fix so as to enable the guides to lower him from below on a sort of pulley.

Kurz's will power and courage seemed inexhaustible. At one moment a snow avalanche swept over the whole party, and later a huge stone narrowly missed striking Schlunegger. Yet now success seemed almost within reach, for Glatthard, standing on Rubi's head and held against the precipice by Rubi's arms, could almost touch Kurz's feet with the tip of an axe. It was at this moment that the culminating disaster supervened: the knots tied by Kurz in the rope jammed in the ring that he had fixed higher up the mountain so that the unfortunate man was caught in a trap and was unable to lower himself any further. His indomitable courage and that of the guides could no longer avail, but his sufferings were at length at an end, for in making the final effort his strength gave out, and he breathed his last at half-past eleven in the morning of the fifth day.

(To be continued).

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