

## DAUPHINÉ IN 1873. By F. GARDINER.

ON Sunday, June 8, our party, consisting of the Rev. C. Taylor, R. and W. M. Pendlebury, T. Cox, and myself, joined our guides, Hans Baumann, Peter Baumann, Peter Knubel, J. M. Lochmatter, and a porter, at Grenoble. We were probably the most numerous mountaineering party that had ever entered this district, and our strange attire, ropes, axes, &c. created a curiosity amongst the townspeople which audibly gave vent to itself in various speculations, the favourite idea being that we were Germans, which coming from a provincial French population cannot be considered complimentary. I have since heard from Miss Brevoort, who visited this district after us, that at Venosc and St. Christophe the same idea was prevalent; also that our party was collectively known as 'les dix,' while Cox and myself were known respectively by the names of 'le grand brun,' and 'le grand blond.' Having procured two 'corbeilles,' or carriages, which looked somewhat like four-post bedsteads set upon wheels, we proceeded to Bourg d'Oisans. The scenery *en route* is fairly picturesque, but terribly marred by an unlimited prospect of straight road, monotonously planted with equidistant poplars. It was past midnight when we arrived at the Hotel Milan, at Bourg d'Oisans, and it required our united efforts to rouse the landlord, who, when he appeared, informed us that the house was full, owing to some local fête; but after some persuasion he said he would consult Madame, leaving us in the meantime in the kitchen of the establishment, which was literally festooned with flies carrying on a most lively conversation amongst themselves. At last our host appeared, stating that having applied some persuasion to the occupants of one of the upper rooms (whether moral or forcible he did not say), they had vacated it in our favour. We were then all five conducted into it, and left to make ourselves as comfortable as we could with two beds, one chair, two chamois-skins and one miniature jug and basin. Early next morning we arranged our store of provisions in different parcels, sending a portion of them to La Grave, but the greater quantity and the tent we took with us to La Bérarde. Since the visit of Mr. Moore's party, in 1864, the landlord told me that he had not been visited by English mountaineers, Mr. Coolidge and Miss Brevoort never having passed through this town. He remembered Mr. Moore and other members of his party, but did not know their names. 'Le Monsieur Tuckett' he specially enquired for. Our break-

fast was substantial and good, but the charge would have been extravagant even at a Grand Hôtel. We took a carriage as far as the junction of the Char road to Venosc, with the main road crossing the Col du Lauteret; and leaving our guides to follow with the tent and provisions, proceeded on foot to Venosc, a prettily situated village, among trees, meadows, and cornfields, the latter somewhat too brilliantly illuminated by bright scarlet poppies to give a good return to their owners. This was the last bit of really pastoral scenery that we were destined to behold for many days; once the village is out of sight, the valley becomes extremely bare and desolate. The mule-path to La Bérarde has been constructed upon the most unscientific principles, alternately ascending and descending in a most wearisome manner. At St. Christophe we found the inn tolerably decent, but, like most other things in Dauphiné, rather unwashed. The natives were friendly but curious. One of the more curious enquired the, to them, inexplicable reason of our appearance in these parts. When we told him that it was for the purpose of ascending mountains, and crossing snow and glacier passes, he shook his head doubtfully and replied, 'Mais ce n'est pas possible, il y a trop de neige.' The first part of his observation we proved before we left Dauphiné to be incorrect, but the latter portion, 'il y a trop de neige,' we occasionally found to be most uncomfortably true. Here our party divided, Cox and the Pendleburys going on to La Bérarde, while Taylor and myself remained behind until the mules came up. When they arrived the baggage had to be transferred to fresh ones, and then came the question of settlement, the prevailing idea being that our nationality was that of the obnoxious Prussian. I presume this heroic Frenchman acted on the principle of 'spoiling the enemy;' certain it was that his charge was exorbitant to the last degree. His original demand he somewhat abated, and we separated with feelings of mutual indignation. From St. Christophe to La Bérarde the valley is indeed desolate; the only village between them is Les Etages, which is certainly the most filthy and wretched village I have seen in any part of the Alps, possibly excepting Ailefroide, in the Val Louise. La Bérarde is not in my opinion nearly so obnoxious. There is said to be a fine view of Les Ecrins from Les Etages, but as it was dusk when we passed we did not see it. At La Bérarde we found the *famille* Rodier waiting up to receive us. The kitchen and general living-room, though small and very dirty, were free from any particularly offensive smell, and overhead was a very good grange, somewhat over-ventilated, but with plenty of clean straw,

where we found our companions comfortably arranged for the night. Old Rodier is now very infirm, and quite past work of any kind; he spends most of his time moping in the chimney-corner. Rodier *fits*, although only a middle-aged man, tells me that his health is not at all good, and that he is now quite unable to act as either guide or porter. He has a son of about sixteen, who looks a strong young fellow, but he has never been upon any mountaineering expedition, so that this central and most important mountaineering position in Dauphiné is absolutely destitute of both guides and porters. We certainly never saw anyone who could act in either capacity. Our first excursion was from La Bérarde to La Grave, over the ridge extending from the Meije to the Grande Ruine, at the most northerly part. Our imaginations, fired by an account of a possible col in Mr. Moore's book, 'The Alps in 1864,' took us in this direction. We did not make the col we had hoped, but crossed the ridge considerably north of the Col des Cavalles at the respectable height of 12,000 feet, thereby making the highest col in Dauphiné. Looking at it from a utilitarian point of view, our col is practically of little use, but the view from its summit and the whole nature of the excursion must, I think, compare favourably in a mountaineering point of view with its rival, the Col des Cavalles. From what we had heard of the Vallon des Etançons we expected to find a valley of stones resembling some of the moraines in the Oberland. Luckily this was not our case, the backwardness of the season mercifully covering these sources of annoyance with a considerable layer of firm snow. Our utter disregard of the precepts of Mr. Ball for a first day's excursion produced the usual effects amongst our party, culminating in my case in a complete rebellion of the bilious system, aided and abetted by a stifling south wind. The ascent to the summit of our col was made over the *débris* of avalanches, in fairly consistent snow, which had completely sealed the crevasses of the Etançons glacier. The commencement of the descent was steep, and required some care, but soon we got on to tolerably easy snow-slopes, and had the felicity of glissading down the Cavalles glacier, which, like its neighbour, the Etançons, had not yet opened its crevasses. On every side the valley along which we passed was closed in by impracticable-looking rocks, especially those of the Grande Ruine, which is one of those peaks that utterly deceive. First Mr. Bonney, then we ourselves, looked upon it as either inaccessible or extremely difficult. Shortly after our visit Mr. Coolidge and Miss Brevoort reached its summit in fifty minutes from the Col de

la Casse déserte. This valley opens into the upper valley of the Romanche, which we found still covered with snow. We descended in a straggling manner, Taylor and myself remaining behind to indulge in the chilly luxury of a bath in the glacier stream; we then emerged upon the Lauteret road, and shortly afterwards reached the village of Villard d'Arène, amongst fields white with heavily-scented narcissi. Passing through the petroleum-flavoured tunnel between Villard d'Arène and La Grave, we were welcomed by the estimable Juge; and taking all things into consideration, I have little hesitation in saying that his inn is the best in Dauphiné, with clean beds and fairly provisioned. He is said to be somewhat exorbitant in his charges, but one of our first cares was to duly impress him with the majesty and importance of the Alpine Club, which certainly in our case was a preventive against rapacity. Madame Juge entertains primitive ideas regarding the washing of floors and the management of her *cuisine*, but she was remarkably willing, and vexed her French soul by preparing our viands without garlic, upon our representing that it was rather offensive than otherwise, which may be regarded as an enormous concession to the eccentricities of the *insulaires*. The famous and unveracious Pic descended upon us as soon as the arrival of our party became known in the village. He had some strange if not strictly trustworthy anecdotes to tell about his own prowess, and is extremely sceptical about the ascent of Les Ecrins in 1864, darkly hinting that he knew a way to the summit. His account of crossing the Breche de la Meije in midwinter with Mr. Moore was quite tragic. Exhibiting a pair of large and very dirty hands, remarkably devoid of nails (the latter phenomenon caused, according to his own account, by a combination of frostbite and heroic devotion to the service of the said Mr. Moore), and seeing me with a green-covered book in my hands, entitled 'The Alps in 1864,' he pointed to it with pardonable pride, and said, 'I am written about in that book.' Ah! sweet Pic, could you but read an English book!

Oh, wad some pow'r the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as ithers see us!

Two days, owing to bad weather, we were compelled to spend *chez Juge*; but on June 13 the weather had cleared sufficiently to enable us to make the ascent of Peyrou d'Amont, a peak under 10,000 ft., intervening between La Grave and the peaks of the Rateau and the Meije, giving a superb view of these two mountains and their glaciers. The summit was

reached without any difficulty, the latter part of the ascent being over soft snow. From our perch we cast longing eyes upon the unscaled summit of the Meije, which from our position looked extremely grand, and quite as formidable as the Aiguille du Dru. Our descent to La Grave was made by the glacier of the Rateau, the whole excursion occupying under 6 hrs. Next morning, at one o'clock, Knubel knocked at my door, told me the time, and suggested that I should get up and look at the weather. It was one of those dubious mornings that are so especially aggravating to a mountaineer—not positively bad, and yet scarcely good enough to warrant a start. W. M. Pendlebury and myself then consulted, and decided to postpone our start for a couple of hours. We wished to add another member of the party to our consultation; but as his door was bolted from the inside, and as he refused to get up, sagely remarking, in most drowsy tones, that he'd 'leave all to the guides,' we were unable to get the benefit of his judgment. Towards three o'clock things looked a little brighter, though fine weather was by no means certain; and just at daybreak we started to ascend the Rateau. After the bad weather of the two preceding days the condition of the snow was most abominable, and sometimes almost dangerous. At a height of only 6,000 ft., the snow commenced, and we put on our gaiters for the day. I mention this to show how low the snow was lying. Beyond the usual difficulties encountered when the snow is in bad condition we met with no incident worthy of notice until we approached the ridge connecting the Meije and Rateau, where the wind suddenly changed to the N., and gradually increased in violence, bringing clouds of soft dry snow that chilled us to the bone. Then the guides determined to take to the ridge, which was of the worst possible description, the rocks being loose and covered with ice, having a snow cornice on both sides. We were a long time upon this horrible arête without making much progress; and the wind constantly increasing in violence, were forced to return when almost within reach of the summit. Under more favourable circumstances I feel convinced that we should have succeeded. In descending the snow was in a most dangerous condition, and we divided our party, so as to travel in different tracks and prevent the avalanches that one party caused from falling on the other. We had been watched from La Grave, and Madame Juge told me that at one time they thought they saw us swept down by an avalanche; and so convinced was she that it was so, that until she beheld our party all intact, descending the meadows flanking the Meije, all preparations for our dinner had been postponed.

The following morning was beautifully fine, and we got our first real view from La Grave of the superb mountain mass of the Meije; but the wind was still very high, and judging from the clouds of snow eddying round the summit of our coveted Rateau, we should probably have been again defeated had we been upon it. Shortly after mid-day we retraced our steps to the upper valley of the Romanche, and bivouaced near the junction of that valley with Clot des Cavalles.

An abandoned hut in connection with some mines that had formerly been worked near this gave us excellent shelter for the night. The door was secured; but the almost total absence of roof in many places enabled us to effect an entrance by that means. The position was very grand and desolate; and it was just one of those evenings that are so especially delightful for a bivouac—the night bright and sharp, but not too cold; and the prospect for the following day's excursion all that could be wished.

Our supper had been most comfortably cooked by an apparatus made under the directions of Mr. F. F. Tuckett, by which over a gallon of soup could be cooked by the aid of a handful of charcoal in about 15 or 20 min., and kept hot for a considerable time. It was upon occasions of this sort that we fully appreciated the benefit of having brought tinned meats with us from England; for at La Bérarde meat was unobtainable, and at most other places, except La Grave, it was neither very good nor plentiful; and as our party consisted of the formidable number of ten, and might be compared to the locusts of the Egyptians or a party of Cook's tourists, eating up everything before them, our stock was almost a necessity. At 2.15 A.M. next morning we made a start in the dark in search of a new pass from the Glacier de la Plate des Agneaux to the Vallon de la Bonne Pierre, or La Bérarde. Leaving the Glacier de la Casse déserte above us immediately to the right, we proceeded towards the centre of the Glacier de la Plate des Agneaux, opposite the Roche Faurio, and discussed the possibility of ascending that peak from this side, and then mounted the glacier in a westerly direction. Between the Roche d'Alvan and Tête de la Charrière a very narrow break in the ridge gave promise of a pass; this was led up to by a narrow and steep couloir. We decided to make for this gap, and the snow, which completely covered the glacier, being in good condition, made rapid progress. The surface of the snow was almost blackened by an extraordinary number of glacier-fleas, finding no doubt, with others of their species, a congenial home in the Dauphiné Alps. The couloir, when reached, was found filled

with avalanche snow in fairly good order, and the summit was reached at 7.15, A.M., exactly 5 hrs. from the time we had left our sleeping-quarters. Mr. Coolidge, a few weeks later, crossed the Col de la Casse déserte, and, owing to some misconception on his part, confused our col with his. I have had some correspondence with him on the subject, and find the distinguishing features of each strongly marked. We estimate the height of our col at 10,700 ft. (aneroid), while that of the Casse déserte is 11,516 ft. The summit of our col was a deep and narrow cleft, through which two men could scarcely pass abreast, bounded by perpendicular rocks; while that of the Casse déserte, although narrow, was not extremely so. The view from the Col de la Casse déserte included Les Écrins and the Vallon des Etançons, but a wall of rock to the left hid La Bérarde. Now, from our col La Bérarde was distinctly visible, while the wall of rocks to the right shut out the Vallon des Etançons, and throughout the entire excursion we never saw Les Écrins. The descent from Mr. Coolidge's col was made into the Vallon des Etançons, ours into the Vallon de la Bonne Pierre. Having built a stone man, we discussed the probabilities of completing our excursion and a name wherewith to christen our pass. We decided to substitute the word brèche for col, as conveying a better idea of the nature of the pass, and after some discussion decided to name it Brèche de la Charrière. Juge, the inn-keeper at La Grave, told me that in Dauphiné patois Charrière signifies a place swept by avalanches, or where avalanches frequently fall. As we mounted to our col by the aid of avalanche *débris*, I think that we may consider the pass appropriately named.

The first part of the descent was made over easy snow-slopes, until our progress was arrested by some very steep rocks overlooking the Vallon de la Bonne Pierre. Here we found some difficulty in obtaining a couloir to descend by, which caused the loss of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr. At last finding the object of our search, we descended towards the moraine of the Bonne Pierre glacier, which, I fancy, is sarcastically so named; that moraine I shall certainly distinguish above other Alpine bugbears, as bearing the palm. During the whole excursion we had not once been roped, which was a great relief. The wisdom of the proceeding I somewhat doubt, as our porter, a most cheerful fellow, who had been carrying an enormous bundle with the utmost unconcern, had a nasty slip in descending the couloir. We reached La Bérarde at 10.30 a.m.,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  hours from the time we had left our sleeping-quarters, including all halts.

Our porter had, some days previously, taken a stock of pro-

visions and our tent to the small spot of green at the head of the Vallon des Etancons, appropriately termed by Mr. Moore, in his book, the '*oasis*,' for it certainly is the only spot in this desert of stones where one can bivouac with any degree of comfort, and I think the name might be retained with benefit to future comers. To this place we proceeded, after a couple of hours' rest at La Bérarde, pitched our tent, and cooked our supper intending to assault the Rateau from this side on the following day. '*Mais l'homme propose, Dieu dispose,*' as Knubel piously observed, for it was fated otherwise. We had just settled down inside our tent, when it commenced to rain; the whole of the next day it rained without intermission, and we found ourselves rather cramped in our linen habitation. Threepenny loo, the perusal of an Arabic grammar and Mr. Ball's '*Dauphiné Alps*,' and the constant compounding of fearfully and wonderfully made dishes of food formed our employment for the day. The rain continuing the next day, we at 4 P.M. determined to descend to La Bérarde, leaving our tent, &c. in charge of the porter. We then held a council of war, and determined to attack the Sommet des Rouies, as the guides considered that, after the very bad weather of the past two days, the Rateau would not be quite safe. When Rodier woke us next morning he announced the state of the weather as '*encore un peu malade.*' However, we determined to start, and at 3.15 A.M. we set out, excepting R. Pendlebury, who had hurt his foot, and the guide, Peter Baumann. We ascended gradually along the Vallon de la Pilatte until we reached the moraine of the Glacier du Chardonnet, from which side we had determined to assail our peak. Towards daylight the weather showed signs of improvement, and later on it became quite fine. The occasional glimpses of rocky peaks and patches of snow through the mist, sometimes illuminated by the rising sun, were exceedingly weird and beautiful. The snow was in dreadfully bad condition, and we took to the rocks as much as possible. The question then arose, which was our mountain? as we were surrounded on all sides by peaks innumerable and fantastic. We were obliged to be guided entirely by the map; and after mounting a considerable height, saw a peak which we mistook for the Sommet des Rouies straight before us, and accordingly ascended it; but to our disgust found ourselves upon one of the nameless peaks of the Clochatel group, which was connected with the Rouies by a narrow and somewhat formidable arête. As, with the snow in such bad condition, we did not relish descending by the way we had come up, and then re-mounting towards the Rouies, it was determined to try the arête. This

we found fully as difficult but not quite so long as we had expected; and after a little step-cutting on the ridge leading to the summit, we finally reached our goal at 12.15, just in time to enjoy a superb view of, I may say, almost the entire range of the Dauphiné Alps. One of our first cares was to look for the Aiguille d'Olan, marked on the French map 3,883 mètres, and, according to that calculation, one of the highest peaks in the district. Although it is not, like the Mount Iseran, non-existing, its height has been, through some error, considerably over-estimated, and is in fact lower than its companion, the Pic d'Olan. Our descent was made very rapidly; but the extremely unstable condition of the snow caused us some anxiety, and it was with satisfaction that we regained the Chardonnet glacier. At 4 P.M. we reached La Bérarde, and found the domestic economy of Madame Rodier's establishment somewhat deranged by the annual bread-baking, and the interior and its inhabitants somewhat more untidy than ever. Old Rodier was placed well out of the way in a twilight corner where the full light of day had never shone, incoherently informing the assembled members of our party of the prowess of Mr. Moore, who had visited him at mid-winter, and 'cette dame Américaine qui est si gentille.' The combination of bread-baking and old Rodier's conversation proving too much for us, we carried our food and a portion of the household delf outside. The crockery of the establishment is of the most startling description, painted in rainbow hues, and may be divided into two classes, the sentimental and interrogatory; the former expressing in blue paint and numerous flourishes sentiments as 'Je t'aime, aimez moi;' and the latter such as 'Êtes-vous sage? Aimez-vous la musique?' The all-important question of the next excursion was then discussed, and, after some debate, we decided to separate; the Pendleburys and Cox to ascend the Grande Aiguille, with Peter Baumann and Lochmatter, while Taylor and I were to mount the Glacier de la Bonne Pierre, with Hans Baumann, Peter Knubel and the porter, to reconnoitre the Roché Faurio, which, I contended, could be ascended from this side. The day was beautifully fine, and anything more sublime than the view from the spot where we pitched our tent cannot be imagined. That most beautiful of Alpine peaks, Les Ecrins, towering above us, formed the most prominent object in the view. Having deposited our impedimenta, we proceeded to thoroughly examine the peak, which both Baumann and Knubel pronounced difficult but feasible. We then returned to our gîte at about 2 o'clock, sent the porter back to La Bérarde with a message to the rest of our party to come up, and luxuriated for the rest of the afternoon, indolently wondering whether 'those

other fellows, had reached the summit of the Grande Aiguille, and whether they would mount to the *gîte* that night.'

At length, as it was commencing to get dark, we began to fear that they were not coming; but between 8 and 9 o'clock we heard a faint shout in the distance, and yelled in return to the best of our ability. We had all rather snubbed the Grande Aiguille, and, owing to a mistaken estimate of its height, our companions had started too late in the day, and found the snow in very bad order. Mr. W. M. Pendlebury has written an account of that expedition, with full details of the day's work, which will form a supplement to this paper.

The guides, having no shelter for the night, smoked their pipes and kept up a continual conversation, which was distinctly audible to the occupants of the tent, and somewhat successfully murdered sleep, so that we were not sorry when Knubel came to the door at 1.30 A.M. with some hot cocoa, which, with some dry-as-dust bread, was dignified by the name of breakfast. At 2.45 A.M. we started, and reached the base of the Roche Faurio just at daybreak. We commenced the ascent by a steep couloir to the left of the Col des Ecrins; but as we had many steps to cut, and the rocks on the left side looked more practicable, we deserted it for them. We then bore continually to the left, crossing numerous couloirs and occasionally mounting by them, but mostly keeping to the rocks. Having gained the ridge half-way to the Col des Ecrins, we followed it to the top. This was certainly one of the most difficult parts of the day's work, as this ridge, like most others in Dauphiné, is of excessive sharpness and horribly rotten. We arrived on the summit at 9 A.M. without any incident worthy of note, except that one of our party had, in getting over a rather difficult place, let his pocket-book, containing between 40*l.* and 50*l.*, fall out of his pocket. It was rapidly disappearing in the direction of the Bonne Pierre Glacier, when a friendly ledge of rock consented to retain it for the benefit of the owner, who was regarding it from above with a dismayed countenance; it was rescued by him a few minutes afterwards. During the different excursions we had made we had seen Les Ecrins from many points of view, but from none of them did it appear so beautiful as from the summit of the Roche Faurio, rising in unmistakable pre-eminence above every other peak in the district, and clothed in one unbroken sheet of snow from base to summit. No mountain that I have yet seen can, in my opinion, surpass it in beauty. When on the summit we held a discussion as to whether we should return by the way we had come up, or descend the mountain towards the Glacier

Blanc, and take the route of the Col des Ecrins towards Val Louise. We eventually decided in favour of the latter place, probably urged thereunto by the possibility of a decent meal at Ville Val Louise, and by a wish to see that valley and the Pelvoux, and to vary our expedition by descending the mountains on the other side. After we had retraced our steps for a short distance over the troublesome arête leading from the summit, we found little difficulty in descending the slopes of snow leading to the Glacier Blanc. The snow was unfortunately still in bad order, and we had a most wearisome trudge down the glacier, which we left shortly after passing the Hotel Tuckett. We then descended to the Pré de Madame Carle, which was still partially covered with snow, and reached Ailefroide at 2.45 P.M., exactly twelve hours from the time we had left our bivouac on the Glacier de la Bonne Pierre. Anything more wretched than the inhabitants of this miserable little village cannot be conceived. The crétins of Aosta seem comparatively intellectual. The verdure of the Val Louise formed an agreeable contrast to the barren rocks and snow-slopes with which we had been satiated during the past week. The village of Ville is charmingly situated, and the houses solidly constructed. The inn, however, is not inviting, not having improved, I should imagine, since it was last described by Alpine writers. We decided to proceed to La Bessée, and called out the landlord to enquire about conveyances. We found him to be a brisk little Zouave, who took an immense interest in us and asked innumerable questions and kept up an incessant conversation. He drove the char in which I was, sitting next to me. He was a violent politician, holding most extraordinary views with regard to the late Franco-German war, and emphasising many of his remarks by nudging me severely in the side. At La Bessée he consigned us to the tender mercies of La Mère Hubbard, whose cupboard, like that traditionally belonging to the name, we found extremely bare. Next day we returned to La Grave, *viâ* Briançon and the Lanteret road. It being the Fête de Dieu, we found that prettily situated town profusely decorated in honour of the event. On our way from La Bessée we had noticed what to our uninitiated eyes seemed like the week's washing hung across the road at some of the villages as we passed. Such a proceeding as a simultaneous washing seemed so utterly inexplicable in Dauphiné, that we enquired the cause, and found that it was merely the household linen hung out to do honour to the fête. I may here remark that the inhabitants of Dauphiné seem to live in an atmosphere of fêtes, for at the principal places we

visited in this district they were either engaged in or preparing for one. We reached La Grave just as it was getting dark, and were in full enjoyment of the first decent meal that we had had for more than a week, when the chief gendarme called in to see us, and to our utter astonishment informed us that we had been accused of feloniously breaking into the abandoned *châlet* in the upper Romanche Valley and occupying it for a night, and that the guardian of the *châlet* threatened to draw up a *procès-verbal* against us, and was coming over from Villard d'Arène, where he lived, to see us next morning. The guardian appeared in due course—his diabolical and filthy appearance I shall not attempt to describe—and made numerous statements against us, which it is needless to say were entirely untrue. As I had been deputed to conduct the affair, I cut his accusations short; and merely admitting that we had occupied the *châlet* for the night, asked him if he would take ten francs for the use of it. He refusing that, I asked him how much he expected. 'Five or six hundred francs!' he replied. Utter astonishment for a moment rendered me speechless; and thinking that I could not have heard him aright, I asked him to write the amount down. Unmistakably it was five or six hundred francs. Like the man who was 'looted' on knave king, I considered this a legitimate time to vent my feelings, and indignantly defied him and the terrors of a French *procès-verbal*, the fearfully extortionate nature of the demand having made me reckless of consequences. We were on the point of starting for our bivouac on the Meije, when he consented to compromise for twenty francs, and then slunk off. That night we spent on the slopes of the Meije, about two hours above La Grave, and next day made the second ascent of the central peak, encountering some difficulty in ascending the last six hundred feet, but were amply repaid by a glorious view from the summit. The western and highest peak, surpassing the one we were upon only by a few feet, looked unspeakably formidable. When Hans Baumann was questioned about it he gave it as his opinion that one Herr and two guides might get up, if they never cared to come down again. Peter Baumann, doubling the amount at which he usually declined anything, declared two thousand francs an insufficient sum to induce him to make the attempt. Having added a few stones to Mr. Coolidge's cairn, we descended to La Grave, and next day our party broke up, R. Pendlebury descending to Bourg d'Oisans, W. M. Pendlebury and Taylor crossing the Col de Galibier, to St. Michel, while Cox and I crossed that most fascinating of passes, the Brèche de la Meije, to La Bérarde, where

we packed up our belongings, settled our account with Rodier, and started for Bourg d'Oisans, where we found R. Pendlebury, at nine o'clock that evening. Next day we passed through the Mont Cenis, *en route* for Zermatt, *viâ* Macugnaga and the Old Weisssthor. That Dauphiné exceeded our expectations it is needless to say, for that will be inferred from the whole tenor of my paper. For wild rocky weird scenery it is unsurpassed by any district that I have yet seen; but the valley scenery is not as a rule attractive, and the Alpine traveller who merely traverses valleys and delights in the soft pastoral scenery of Northern Switzerland would look upon this district as the abomination of desolation. The accommodation was not nearly so bad as we had been led to expect. La Bérarde certainly cannot boast superior entertainment, but there is a good grange, and plenty of clean straw to sleep in. My companions unanimously agree with me that one has not to put up with very much more discomfort here than in other unfrequented parts of the Alps. The most disagreeable feature in this district is the almost universal extortion by which we were constantly being victimised; but apart from these drawbacks I think I may safely recommend those mountaineers who like myself have been born into the world too late to make their mountaineering reputations by the first ascents of the Schreckhorn, the Weisshorn, or the Matterhorn; to go to Dauphiné and try the Crête du Pelvoux, the Crête de l'Encula, or the western peak of the Meije.

THE GOLDEN EAGLE AND ITS EYRIE. By WILLIAM A. BAILLIE GROHMAN.

THE TIROL, on which I am afraid many of the heroes of Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn look with feelings akin to contempt, presents to me, in the shape of the facility of having that noblest of sport, chamois-stalking, great attractions; and it is chiefly owing to the charm this sport exercises over my mind that for the last eight or ten years I have annually spent a considerable portion of the summer and autumn among the Kalkgebirge of the Tirol.

The two *sine quâ nons*—a clear head, and the willingness and power to undergo fatigue and hardship—remain the same factors of vital importance with the chamois-stalker as with his *confrère* the mountaineer; and if my 'passion' is of a somewhat more breakneck nature than mere Alpine mountain-