

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 Ceniz, *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 non*s—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-

earing, I find it combines all the charms of the latter pastime with the interest natural to one fond of sport. Of all the enemies disastrous to the race of the chamois the Golden Eagle, or Steinadler, ranks as the first. This fearfully powerful bird has of late years become very rare indeed. I doubt if at the present moment there are more than eight or ten pairs existing in the Tirol. How many Switzerland harbours I cannot venture to say, my experience being confined to the Eastern Alps.

Several years ago I assisted in an attempt to rob an eagle's eyrie of its young inhabitant. The attempt failed, but left such a vivid impression on my mind that it was with the greatest pleasure I heard, soon after my arrival in Kufstein, the frontier town of the Tirol, in the summer of 1872, that a pair of golden eagles were ravaging the Brandenbergthal, and what was of greater import, were supposed to have their eyrie in one of the neighbouring side-valleys.

The Brandenbergthal, in scenery very poor, is for its length one of the most unknown valleys in the Tirol. It opens into the broad Inn valley, nearly opposite the Zillerthal, and stretches—the valley is 40 miles long—far over the frontier into Bavaria, although bearing, as soon as it enters the Bavarian dominions, another name. About 25 miles from the point where it meets the Inn valley the Johannesclause is situated. As the latter part of the name indicates, it is a wood-drift, one of the largest of its kind in the Tirol.

Several years prior to the date of the present expedition I had paid a prolonged visit to this secluded spot, combining with fair sport the ascent of the adjacent peaks. The keeper of the wood-drift, old Tomerl, therefore, was an old acquaintance of mine, and many a time had I spent a cold and lonely night in some cave or under a particularly broad and sheltering pine with him as my companion. The evening after my receiving the welcome news of the presence of an eyrie found me safely installed in the little cottage of Tomerl, sitting before a savoury but somewhat too greasy *smarn*, prepared with special care, and in consequence, unfortunately, an over-allowance of butter, by Maudle, the buxom wife of my host.

The entire isolation of the man's house made the arrival of a new face an important event, and tended to induce four or five woodcutters, who had already retired to the general bedroom, the hayloft, to descend and give me, as they likewise were old friends of mine, a hearty welcome. Their presence proved to be of great use to me, and it was not

long before I was perfectly informed as to the whereabouts of the *horst*, or eyrie. Their vocation as woodcutters brought them, while decimating a forest situated about nine miles from the hut at the extreme end of a narrow and wild mountain ravine, just opposite the eyrie, which with the usual parental care was built in one of the small crevices by which the Falknerwand, a peak, the side of which towards the valley is a perpendicular wall some 900 or 1000 feet in height, is riven. The next day being Sunday, and therefore the only day these fellows could be of any help to me by joining the expedition, we determined to make an early start, in order to be able to return in the evening to the sheltering roof of Tomerl's cottage.

Sunrise next day found us far advanced on our road. On reaching, after a smart walk of more than two hours, the base of the wall, the site of the eyrie, I immediately perceived that besides being a more adventurous affair than I had anticipated, nothing could be done from this side of the peak. Indeed, the precipice seemed not only perpendicular, but actually inclining forward in its upper part, and this impression seemed to be borne out by the fact of our finding close to the base numerous blackened remains of fires which had been lit under the shelter of the cliff by belated keepers, or, what seemed even more probable, by poachers.

By a circuit of considerable length we finally gained the summit of the peak, and on cautiously looking down, which we all did, *ventre à terre*, we perceived that 90 or 100 feet below us a ledge or band ran horizontally across the face of the wall.

Our heavy 50 fathom $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rope was fastened to a stump of a tree, and ten minutes later we were all, with the exception of one man, standing on this ledge, which to our regret we found to be narrower than we expected—in most parts not more than 20 feet wide—thus necessitating the greatest care in our movements. Our force consisted of two keepers and six woodcutters, five of whom were present; the sixth, remaining on the top, lowered the heavy rope by means of a cord. Now our most difficult task, that of fixing the rope, began. A block of wood with which we had provided ourselves was, by means of iron cramps and hooks, fixed just over the place where the eyrie was partially visible to the edge of the ledge, the rope passing over it, thus obviating all chafing against the sharp-edged rock. Opposite this block a strong iron hook was firmly secured in one of the minute crevices of the rock.

The rope passing through the hook was directed sideways, where the men told off for pulling were standing.

Being anxious to be 'the' man, and being the lightest of the lot, our attention was next turned to securing me to the rope, which was done in the following manner: a strong broad leather belt, similar to the one worn by our fire-brigade men, was fastened round my waist; in front of the belt an iron ring, strong enough to hold a bull, allowed the rope to pass through, to the end of which a strong piece of wood was knotted, on which I seated myself astraddle. Thus, even if I did slip off my wooden horse, I could not fall, the wood preventing the rope from passing through the ring. I preferred this manner of fastening to the orthodox way of binding waist and both legs to the rope, thus impeding free movements.

Slinging my trusty rifle over my back, fixing a large hunting knife in my belt, and putting a small but powerful Smith revolver in my trousers-pocket, I was ready to start. Five men took hold of the rope, while the two keepers posted themselves *ventre à terre*, at each end of the file. On their watchfulness and their rifles my life would, in case of an attack of the old birds, just as much depend as on the muscular arms of the five shaggy-headed woodcutters.

A bag of the very stoutest canvas was fixed to my seat—it was the future prison of my capture, the young eagle; and while old Tomerl, one of my guardian angels, put the long pole, shod with iron at one end, and at the other fitted with a strong boathook which we had forged the night before in the miniature smithy of Tomerl's cottage, into my hands, he gave me a gentle push which sent me clear of the edge into space. Although it was not the first time I had been on a similar expedition, the prodigious height was for the first two or three minutes not without a sort of paralysing effect on my mind. Five minutes later I had quite recovered, and enjoyed the novel position of hanging on a rope scarcely thicker than a man's finger over an abyss of nearly 1,000 feet in depth quite as much as any new and hitherto unknown sense of danger charms the minds of men fond of rough Alpine climbing and mountaineering in the strict sense of the word.

The descent lasted not more than ten or fifteen minutes, and when I arrived opposite the crevice where the existence of the eyrie was plainly indicated by a mass of dry sticks and bleached bones strewn about, I stopped further progress by two distinct jerks at the signal-line. The distance separating me from the eyrie was, owing to the projecting nature of the ledge on which the men holding me were standing, and to the overhanging

formation of the entire precipice, some ten or twelve feet ; but by the use of my pole, the hook of which I caught on a projecting stone, this difficulty was soon overcome.

At first the bulwark of dry sticks, the interstices between them being filled with dry moss, prevented my seeing anything. Cautiously raising my head over the side of the eyrie, while with my right hand I guarded my head and face against any attempt of the young bird to attack me, I looked in, and what was my surprise to find, not one bird, but two young eagles therein ! A peal of shrill shrieks and sundry rather venomous-sounding hisses greeted my perhaps rather unlooked-for appearance.

Vainly flapping their enormous wings, while with their small but inexpressibly wild *lichter* eyes they kept staring at me, they opened their beaks—hooked at the end, and already of an alarming size and strength—to their widest extent, plainly indicating that their dinner-hour was nigh, and their hopes—destined to disappointment—of a *bonne bouche* provided by parental care.

Depositing my rifle and pole on a slanting slab of rock close at my side, I proceeded to bag one of my young prisoners. While he was yet struggling in the ample folds of the bag I had thrown over his head I pinioned his formidable talons ; and then unbagging him, I proceeded to secure his wings and beak by means of a piece of cord. I then deposited him in the bag, which, although a good-sized one, he entirely filled out, thus excluding the idea of putting the other bird into the same receptacle. As it is an exceedingly rare occurrence that two young eagles are found in one eyrie, I was unprovided with a second bag, and consequently was placed in a fix regarding the means of securing my second prisoner. After a good many ineffectual trials I at last managed to secure him by slipping a running noose over his feet, after which it was easy enough to bind and prevent him from doing any mischief. The bag containing the first prisoner I tied to the signal-cord hanging by my side ; the other one I resolved to carry up in my hands, there being little danger of his hurting me, if his pinions and shackles held out against the vigorous efforts of the bird to get free.

I was glad to get out of the eyrie after having brought my expedition to such a successful end, as the stench created by the putrefying flesh of the various victims of the parent birds which were strewn about the adjacent rocks, was something dreadful, overpowering to any senses more delicate than those of a bird of prey. Arranging myself on my seat, I fixed the

hook of my pole in its old place, and gave the signal to hoist me up. The bird I held in my left hand, while with my right I intended to let myself gradually swing out till I reached the perpendicular position. As the sequel shows, I had reckoned without my host. The first hard pull of the men at the rope, which, contrary to my instructions, was much too vigorous a one, wrenched the pole out of my grasp, sending the latter to the bottom of the precipice, and me at a fearful pace outwards. My position was, as anybody can imagine, fraught with great danger. The velocity of the retrograde movement would dash me with fearful force against the solid wall of rock. There was only one way, and that a very dubious one, of saving myself. Fortunately my presence of mind did not forsake me in this critical moment, and I grasped at this only chance of preserving my life and limbs. Tilting the upper part of my body backwards and my legs forward, I awaited the dreaded shock, taking, of course, the chance of my striking the rock feet foremost as the only way of saving myself. The retrograde movement of the pendulum to which my weight supplied the velocity set in, and the second afterwards I was safe, having struck the rock with my feet, which, well protected as they were by my immensely heavy shoes, were the only part of my body that could have effectually resisted the shock. The only bad result of the contact with the rock was a paralysed feeling in my legs and a twitching sensation in my back and loins.

Need I say how thankful I was that I had not followed the promptings of my companions to take off, before leaving the ledge, my shoes and stockings, in order to facilitate the climbing, which, as we supposed, would be a matter of necessity to enable me to reach the eyrie? Why and for what reason I refused to follow this advice and do a thing which, in the course of my chamois-stalking experience, I had done so very often when by an oversight or through laziness I had failed to bring my *steigeisen*, or, when even provided with them, the particularly difficult nature of the rocks I had to pass obliged me to divest myself of shoes and stockings, is and must remain a mystery which I do not care to solve, the fact of my life having been thus saved being sufficient for me.

While the above incident occurred I had remarked that a dark object had flashed past me in so close a proximity that I distinctly felt the pressure of the air and heard the whistling sound it created falling from seemingly a great height. Thinking it was a stone, I paid no farther heed to it, my attention being moreover attracted to a sharpish gash in my thigh,

which the bird placed under my arm had, notwithstanding his beak was bound with my pocket-handkerchief, managed to inflict. Some loose gunpowder strewn into the wound was an effectual if somewhat painful cure, and it was only after having applied it that I remarked that instead of being pulled upwards I was quite stationary.

It appeared afterwards that the object which flashed past me a few minutes before was the block over which the rope ran, and which was of such vital importance in securing my safety. This, of course, I did not know at the time, and consequently my anxiety grew from minute to minute. An hour and then another past, and still I was in my most helpless of positions.

The day was far advanced, and consequently the danger of the dreaded return of one or the other of the eagles was momentarily increasing; while Nature, to cool my impatience and make my position more ridiculous in her eyes, destined me for a cold bath, the water being supplied by one of those short but terribly grand thunderstorms which victimise Alpine regions. Drenched to the skin in the course of the first 5 min., and nearly blinded by the vivid flashes of lightning, I could not have wished my bitterest enemy to fare worse. At last, after hanging stationary for more than 3 hrs., a tug and the strain on the rope reassured me that my fears of having to stop the night in my helpless and, after my recent drenching, most unpleasant position, were unfounded. A quarter of an hour subsequently I had reached the ledge. It being very nearly dark, I deferred all questions till we had reached the top of the cliff, which we did in the same manner as in the morning—viz. the heavy rope being pulled up by means of the cord and fastened to the tree, we swarmed up one by one, and at last were all standing safe and sound on the top of the Falknerwand. Although night was fast setting in, still 9 miles of rather stiffish climbing and walking were before us. We proceeded to finish the provisions we had brought with us, and indeed the poor fellows were in sore need of it. While we were doing justice to the meal the tale of the different mishaps of the day was told, now by one now by another of the sufferers.

It seemed that as soon as the accident which sent the block to the bottom of the Falknerwand was perceived by the men engaged in hoisting me up hand-over-hand they desisted from continuing to do so, lest the rope, now unprotected, should be injured by the sharp-edged stones, and thus place my life in imminent danger. They communicated the mishap to the man on the top of the cliff, who immediately set out to get a substi-

tute, which he did by descending to the base of the peak, felling a young tree, and shaping a block similar to the one lost. While returning to the crest of the Falknerwand, with the block on his shoulder, the thunderstorm overtook him, and a flash of lightning striking a large and prominent boulder of rock not 40 paces from where he stood, dashed him in an insensible state to the ground. On recovering, after some time, he proceeded with all haste to the top, and lowered the block by means of the connecting cord to his companions on the ledge. What would have become of us and me in particular had the man been killed by the lightning, it is difficult to say; most probably starvation would have been our fate. The next human habitation, excepting old Tomerl's cottage, was 8 or 9 hrs. walk from the Falknerwand; and as the latter's wife did not know the direction of the eyrie, the chances of her finding us in time for mortal help were small, indeed so small, that when I hinted the thought to my sturdy companions the momentary gloom and dark frown on their shaggy brows told me but too plainly that they concurred in my dark anticipation.

Our meal finished, we placed our pinioned prisoners in a large hamper specially provided for the transport, and, after some trouble, contrived to manufacture two torches, in the ruddy glare of which we wended our way down the steep incline to the bottom of the Falknerwand. From some dry wood found beneath the sheltering precipice we made some more torches, and finally reached the Johannesclaus at a late hour, rather worn and hungry, but highly satisfied with our success. A steaming *shmarn* and *speck* bacon—the latter a great treat for the men—soon appeased our hunger; the thirst, however, seemed to me to be of a more formidable nature, as it was close upon 2 o'clock when the last touch on the chords of the zither accompanying the final *schuaddertüfler* sent us up our ladder to the hayloft.

On my return next morning from my morning stalk, with a roebuck on my back, I had full leisure to look at the young eagles, who, released from their shackles, had been placed in a small barn, the door of which had been unhinged, and in its stead stout wooden laths fixed across the opening. Before untying their fetters the wings had been measured, those of the hen bird being fully two or three inches larger than the wings of the cock bird, the latter expanding 6 ft. 8 in. The *aufbruch* or entrails of my buck furnished them with a capital breakfast, and the rapidity with which it was despatched made old Tomerl, who was standing at my side watching the proceedings, shake his head and ask me where to goodness he could find the where-

withal to feed these two voracious babies. A week afterwards the hen bird was sold to a neighbouring head keeper of a large private preserve for 45 florins, or 4*l.* 10*s.* The cock bird I found alive and kicking when I visited the *clause* last year, though since, I hear, he has succumbed to the prison diet and confinement to his barn. The men who, together with me, had risked life and limb in bagging these noble birds pocketed the reward of 2*l.* awarded by Government for the destruction or extraction of young eagles from their eyrie, an exploit the charm of which I have endeavoured to describe in the foregoing lines to the readers of the 'Alpine Journal' in general, and to my fellow-members in particular.

ITINERARY OF A TOUR IN THE CAUCASUS MADE BY
MESSRS. F. GARDINER, F. C. GROVE, A. W. MOORE, AND
H. WALKER, WITH PETER KNUBEL, OF ST. NIKLAUS,
AND BAKOUA PIPIA, A MINGRELIAN SERVANT.

Date	Route	Observations
July 6	From Kutais by the road of the Mamison Pass to the last of a series of refuges, or 'cantines,' on the south side of the Nakarala mountains, near the village of Tkvibula (13½ hrs.).	The Mamison road is well traced, but, not being metalled, is, after rain, almost impassable from mud. We found it in that state.
" 7	Over the Satchori Pass (3,072 ft.) to Nikortzminda (4½ hrs.); thence down the valley of the Khotevi to its junction with that of the Rion, and up the latter to Sori (6½ hrs.).	Beyond Nikortzminda the path improves.
" 8	Up the valley of the Rion to Gebi (12 hrs.).	
" 9	At Gebi.	
" 10	Up the valleys of the Rion and Zopkhetiri, and over the ridge between the latter and the upper Rion to a point about 1½ hr. below the glacier in which the Rion rises (11 hrs.).	The detour up the valley of the Zopkhetiri was quite needless—an act of folly on the part of the Gebi porters.
" 11	One hour farther up the valley to a rock giving some shelter (6,250 ft.).	
" 12	Glacier pass (11,400 ft.) to the valley of the Tcherék, and down the valley to the highest occupied Alp, where is a guard to protect the flocks	The ascent is by the right bank of the Rion glacier, and over an extensive snowfield. The head of the Tcherék valley is filled by huge glaciers, not