

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

RANDOLPH LL. HODGSON.

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ON PLAIN AND PEAK



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By Ottomar Anschütz, Berlin, W. (früher Lissa.)

THE CHAMOIS. "Startled."

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

SPORTING AND OTHER SKETCHES OF
BOHEMIA AND TYROL

By
RANDOLPH LL. HODGSON
AUTHOR OF "WANDERINGS IN UNKNOWN AUSTRIA"

ILLUSTRATED
BY HER SERENE HIGHNESS
PRINCESS MARY OF THURN AND TAXIS
AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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TO
MY FRIEND
PRINCE ALEXANDER
OF
THURN AND TAXIS
THE BEST SPORTSMAN
I KNOW

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I

BOHEMIA AND ITS PEOPLE

I

B

I

Bohemia and its People

“. . . imagine me,
Gentle spectators, that I now may be,
In fair Bohemia.”

—*Shakespeare, “The Winter’s Tale.”*

HERE is no country that has been so much maligned and misunderstood as Bohemia. The historic Frenchman, who fancied that all gipsies were Bohemians, has much to answer for. The word “Bohemian” has become a slang expression, and gained a sense that it will probably never lose; and all because of that little mistake of the fifteenth century.

A certain writer, named William Shakespeare, did not mend matters—at least, as far as the geographical position of the country was concerned. “A desert country near the sea”—thus he describes it. And, again, he makes Antigonus ask,—

“. . . our ship hath touch’d upon
The deserts of Bohemia?”

To which “a mariner” replies,—

“Ay, my lord; and fear we have landed in ill time.”

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It is curious what a vague idea the average Briton possesses of geography, even to-day. I met an old college friend a few weeks ago, whom I had not seen since we were at Cambridge together. After we had exchanged greetings, and expressed surprise at coming across one another quite unexpectedly, we began to inquire into one another's well-being.

"And what have *you* been doing with yourself?" was his first question.

"I have been in Bohemia for the last six months," I said.

"Bohemia! Where's that?" he asked.

"In Central Europe; it forms part of the Austrian Empire," I replied, for I always like to give information—when I can.

"Does it?" he said; "I always thought Bohemia was a *suburb of London*."

A vast plain, surrounded by a circlet of mountains, Bohemia resembles a gigantic soup-plate in its conformation. A melancholy land, and a melancholy people. And yet, whether one sees it in the summer months, basking in the rays of a glaring sun, with the broad expanse of level ground tinged with the gold of the ripening corn; or in the depths of winter, when the spotless snow-field, glittering beneath a steel-blue sky, stretches away and away to the horizon, the country well deserves Shake-



"A CIRCLET OF MOUNTAINS."

BOHEMIA AND ITS PEOPLE

speare's epithet of "fair." And summer and winter alike, with a charm in their very monotony, standing out, like a royal mantle of velvety green on the bosom of the land, are the silent pine forests.

Two thousand years ago Bohemia formed the centre of the *Hyrkania Sylva*—that great forest which extended from the Rhine to Poland, and of which Julius Cæsar wrote in the sixth book of his *De Bello Gallico*. From his description of the animals that haunted its depths, it seems as if the reindeer, the elk, and the aurochs were then to be found there. His account of the elk is particularly quaint: "they have legs without joints and ligatures," he says; "neither do they lie down in quiet for this cause, and if they should fall to the ground, having been accidentally thrown down, they cannot lift themselves or rise. Trees are their beds; against these they lean, and so, reclining only a little, take their rest."

But all these animals have long ago been driven northwards by the advance of civilization.

Walk through a Bohemian forest to-day, and nothing more formidable than a red deer or roebuck will cross your path. The wild boar is becoming scarce, except in preserved ground, and the lynx has almost died out.

The most striking feature of the pine-woods is their intense stillness. No small birds fill the air

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with song. Occasionally, one may hear the whistle of the golden oriole, the harsh scream of the jay, or the cry of the woodpecker ; but, for the most part, the gentle whispering of the fir-needles is the only sound that breaks the solemn silence. It is as if one wandered through an enchanted forest, where all things slept.

Bohemian history is a sealed book as far as most Englishmen are concerned. The Czech agitation of a few years back, and the Omladina trials that followed it, brought the Bohemians and their aspirations to the notice of newspaper readers for but a short time.

And yet between the history of the two countries—Great Britain and Bohemia—there exist many links of sympathy and similarity. It was in Bohemia and Moravia that the Reformation first took firm root under the guiding hand of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, the disciples of our first great reformer, John Wycliffe. Oliver Cromwell found his counterpart in the person of the national leader, George of Podiebrad. Again, the problem that faces Austrian politicians to-day is the question of Home Rule—not for Ireland, but for Bohemia.

Since the time when mere tradition gives place to history the Bohemians have been continuously struggling and fighting for three great ends—their religion, their language, and nationality. The reli-

BOHEMIA AND ITS PEOPLE

gious contest has run its course, and Protestants and Romanists have found that they can exist happily side by side ; but the two latter are still the questions of the hour.

The Bohemians possess all the Slav attributes of melancholy and fatalism to their fullest extent. If a schoolboy has failed to pass an examination, he, as likely as not, goes to the nearest pond and drowns himself ! In one small village there have been three suicides of this kind in the last year. To these characteristics add an intense love of music, and an inability to distinguish between “ mine ” and “ thine,” and you have a Bohemian. There is a saying to the effect that, when a baby is born, a violin is placed on one side of the cradle, and a silver spoon on the other. If the child reaches for the violin, he will be a musician ; if he takes the spoon, he will be a thief. One of the two he must be ; often he is both !

Nothing could be more incorrect than the popular idea of a Bohemian—that notion of a happy-go-lucky, careless, good-natured, merry individual, who takes things as they come, and is, at least, not discontented with them.

There are but three classes in Bohemia, and, indeed, in Austria. Firstly, the great aristocracy ; secondly, the *bourgeoisie*, comprising the lawyers, doctors, merchants, and all the multitudinous offi-

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

cials and clerks that are so abundant on the Continent; and, lastly, the peasants. With the great gulf that there is fixed between each of the three, it is not surprising that class prejudice should be one of the strongest features of Austrian social life.

But far stronger than any class prejudice, there exists in Bohemia the most intense racial hatred. Whilst the inhabitants of the south and central portions of the country are mostly Slavs, those of the north and the Saxon and Bavarian frontiers are German. The Slav hates the German, and the German reciprocates the feeling with interest. The Slav will speak nothing but Bohemian, even if he knows German; the German longs to see the Bohemian language forced out of existence by Act of Parliament. It is the old struggle of centuries—the struggle of language and nationality—still going on.

This racial hatred is the greatest danger to the Austrian Empire. An Austrian does not say, "I am an Austrian," but, "I am a Bohemian," or, "I am a Viennese," or, "I am a Moravian." It is not the glorification of the whole Empire that he looks for, but that of the portion of it to which he himself belongs. Austria's peril lies in the fact that she consists of a conglomeration of particles, each one of which wishes to be independent of the others.

Up to the revolution of 1848 the Bohemian



A BOHEMIAN CASTLE.



BOHEMIA AND ITS PEOPLE

peasant was nothing but a serf—a slave. Now he has got his freedom, and he is not quite sure what to do with it. Traces of the old *régime* still linger. The peasant still kisses the hand of the local lord of the soil, and cringes before his superiors as they pass. In private, however, he drinks in the principles of socialism and anarchy, which that curse of the present day, the paid agitator, is only too ready to pour into his ears.

But, at the bottom, the peasant is not a bad fellow. He is quite uneducated, and miserably poor. If he is an agricultural labourer, his wages amount to the magnificent sum of *one* shilling a day. Probably his wife also works in the fields, and earns thereby six-pence per diem. But he cannot count even on these poor wages all the year round. There is the long hard winter to be got through, when work is not to be had. At this time he runs into debt with the Jew shopkeeper—one of which is to be found in every village, however tiny—and then part of his wages of the next summer have to go in attempting to free himself from the web that the Israelite spider is, slowly but surely, spinning round him. Little wonder that the daily fare of the Bohemian peasant consists of dry black bread.

His cottage is nothing more than a hovel, and household and personal cleanliness are things unknown. If he should be somewhat better off, and

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the happy possessor of a cow or pig, it is an absolute certainty that he will arrange his estate so that the house door opens directly on to the manure heap!

It is among the middle classes that socialism and all its kindred branches have taken the deepest root; and, strangely enough, the societies of this ilk all originate in the universities. "Is it not curious," the Duke of Wellington once said, "that all the mischief in Germany seems to have its rise in the universities, while in this country we look to the universities, and to the state of feeling there, as one of our main sources of security?" Exactly the same thing holds good in Bohemia at the present time.

The Slavs, as a race, are not handsome. A head too large for the stunted body, high cheek-bones, a dark muddy complexion, and coarse features, do not tend to good looks either in the masculine or feminine gender. A visitor to Prague will be struck, not so much by the massive grandeur of its buildings, the old-world quaintness of its gloomy narrow streets, the beauty of the old bridge, with its many statues, that spans the turbid waters of the Mulda, as by the extreme plainness of its inhabitants.

The German-Bohemians of the north and west are a totally different race. More thrifty than the Slavs, they are therefore in better circumstances. They are, as a whole, deeply attached to the Emperor in person, and devoted to the maintenance

BOHEMIA AND ITS PEOPLE

of the Empire. But they lack the unanimity of feeling and the powers of combination of the Slavs, and so, as a political party, are gradually losing ground.

The Czechs have, on the other hand, made great strides during the last few years. The use of the language has received the official sanction of the Government, and more than one Austrian Premier has found it necessary to yield to the wishes of the Bohemians in various particulars.

What will be the future of Bohemia? Who can say? The Slav peasant casts his eyes over the great plains that stretch away and away to the north-east, and thinks that there—under that great Empire of the north—under the rule of the Tsar—lie happiness and content. In his dream he builds up a vision of all the Slav countries of Europe bound together in a mighty union—an all-powerful Empire of the East.

Is it a dream?

II
MY FIRST STAG

II

My First Stag

I WAS staying with Prince — at a castle (or “Schloss,” as they call it there) in Bohemia, not a hundred miles from Prague.

It was autumn. The time when the oak trees put on their red and yellow livery, and the stems of the birches gleam white through the golden showers of leaves that come rustling down, and only the sombre pines stand dark and unchangeable amid the changing foliage.

The time when the dew lies thick on the grass, and the mist rises dense and damp, and the evening air feels chilly, and the stars grow clearer and brighter, and one knows that summer is dead and that winter is coming. But it is a glorious season to the sportsman; for with the first frost that whitens the ground and nips and scatters the fading leaves comes the rutting-time of the stags, when the silent woods re-echo with the hoarse roar of each gallant champion as he sends forth his challenge to his rivals.

Behold then a party of two, consisting of the

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Prince and myself, noiselessly threading the dark woods at five o'clock on an October morning. The moon is still shining brightly, and only a faint glimmer in the east betokens the approaching dawn. The forest lies around us, sombre and still; and not a sound is to be heard but the faint murmur of the breeze among the leaves and an occasional dismal hoot from a distant owl.

It is one particular stag that we are in search of—an old acquaintance of mine that had baffled my efforts day after day, and never given me more than a fleeting glimpse of himself in the far distance, sufficiently near, however, to show what a fine beast he was, and to make me more covetous than ever of his wide-spreading antlers. He had an objectionable habit, too, of practising for the battles of the "Brunft" (as the Austrians call the rutting-time) on the plantations of young trees, and destroying dozens of promising firs in a single night, a fact that made us doubly anxious to secure him.

But what are those grey spectres that are moving in the open glade below us? Red deer, certainly. Of the two nearest to us one is larger than the other, and we make out that they are a hind and calf; but there are more beyond. They are feeding away to the right, and we cannot make our approach with the wind as it is, so there is nothing for it but to go round.



WRIGGLING ALONG.

MY FIRST STAG

The moonbeams grow fainter ; the east glows with daffodil, primrose, and pink ; the light grows stronger and clearer, and there is sufficient to shoot by, when, with the morning breeze blowing fresh in our faces, we approach the place where we expect to find the deer.

We have heard no semblance of a roar, and do not know if there is a stag with them, and, if there is, whether it is *our* stag, or rather the stag we *hope* to make ours, so it is an anxious moment.

Ah! that settles it! There is a faint moaning sound, like the low of a consumptive cow—there *is* a stag ahead, and he is roaring too, but only very feebly and lazily.

“ We shall have to crawl,” says the Prince.

“ All right,” I say.

So we crawl! He first, to show me how to do it ; and I behind, endeavouring to imitate him.

Crawling is but a wearisome mode of progression at the best—particularly with such a master of the art as the Prince in front of one! There was the difficulty of keeping up with him at all in the first place, intensified by having to carry a rifle—there was the avoidance of dead sticks and dried leaves, and all the other multitudinous trifles that would make a noise if one got reckless and attempted to put in a spurt so as not to be left behind—and then there was *my first stag* ahead! Would he run

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

away? Would he be standing broadside on? Would he be far or near? Is a stag a big object to shoot at? Horrible thought! Should I miss him?

These and a thousand other doubts and anxieties filled my mind, as I toiled gingerly along; with the Prince going gaily on ahead, like some wild animal stealing on its prey!

"I can see some of his ladies," whispers the Prince, "and I believe the stag is in that hollow."

We are not crawling now—we are wriggling along like serpents.

My companion has stopped behind a tree, and is gazing through the glasses.

"It *is* the stag," he says, "and he is lying down. You can get a shot from here. It's a very difficult one—there's only a bit of him to be seen; but you'll have to risk it."

I wriggle up alongside, and look through the glasses also.

Yes, there he is! I can see one of his antlers, and a little bit of his neck, between the trees; and there are three or four hinds all staring our way.

"I believe those hinds see us," says the Prince. "You must shoot at once."

Reader, do you remember your first shot at a stag?

I shall never forget my feelings at that moment!



Photo by OTTOMAR ANSCHÜTZ,

"I HAD A BROADSIDE SHOT."

[Berlin, W. Uruher Lissa].

MY FIRST STAG

I felt as if I were going to be hanged—the scenes of my life passed in review before me—I wished I had never seen a rifle—never seen a stag—and all this time I was attempting to hold steady on that infinitesimally small bit of brown that seemed to dance between the trees!

Crack! The stag jumps up and gallops off, accompanied by his harem.

“I’m afraid he’s missed,” says the Prince.

I will not take you through the agonies of the remainder of that day, reader. How we found that the bullet had just grazed one of those miserable trees! How we followed up the deer. How I had a broadside shot at two hundred yards. How the stag turned and faced me as I pulled the trigger! How the bullet sped forth only to find its billet in some part of the beautiful nature that spread above and around and beneath him!

The Prince was very kind. He said it was bad luck. Looking back now, I believe it was!

* * * * *

The next morning sees us out again, and making for the same ground that we had passed over the previous day. A roaring stag generally haunts the same locality—even if disturbed he comes back. And there is no doubt about his roaring this morning. His hoarse challenge echoes and re-echoes from the self-same hollow.

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From the nearest village, three miles away, comes the sound of a band of music, and at intervals the firing of a small cannon. It is hardly light, but it is a great Saint's Day, and the Bohemian peasant begins his religious observances betimes. It is a curious accompaniment to our stalk.

But Fortune smiles on us at last! The stag is there—walking restlessly to and fro—ploughing up the ground with his horns—and *alone*.

More crawling and wriggling, and we reach a great fir tree within a hundred yards of our game, and I prepare for the shot.

And now the stag turns. Nearer and nearer he comes. Is he going to walk right up to us?

No! he stops at about sixty yards—facing us.

There he stands—a grand object, with his shaggy neck, his head up, his nose thrust forward, the hot breath issuing from his nostrils like steam—and stares at the tree that shelters my trembling self!

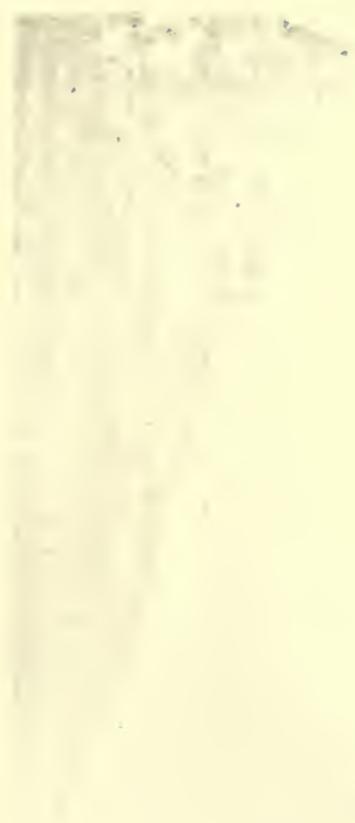
But I am not idle all this time—I am covering that broad chest, and am gently, *gently* pressing the trigger.

A report—a cloud of smoke—and the stag has wheeled round and is galloping away, seemingly none the worse. But what is this? A hundred yards or so, and he pulls up, walks slowly on, and then stands, his proud head hanging down.

“He's hit!” exclaims the Prince.



“THERE HE STANDS!”



MY FIRST STAG

There is something pitiable in the appearance of every wounded animal—doubly so, when that animal is a deer, with its great pathetic human-looking eyes—but I am afraid my feelings were more of exultation than of pity at that moment.

The poor beast moves slowly on, continually stopping every few yards, until he passes out of sight among the trees ; and after some minutes we follow.

There is no doubt about his being hit—his path is marked by drops of blood, and, from the way in which it has spurted out, the bullet has evidently passed through his lungs.

He is lying down when we come up to him, motionless, with one antler resting on the ground, and to all appearance dead ; but the next moment he is up, and has galloped off, before I can cock and raise the rifle.

The Prince and I both remark that we are “blowed” ; and then we sit down and hold a council of war.

The stag, though wounded, has evidently plenty of “go” left in him, so, if we go after him at once, we may follow at his tail all day, and lose him altogether. We therefore decide to stay where we are for half an hour, and give him a chance to lie down, and grow stiff.

It is broad daylight now, and the sun is high in

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

the heavens, and the squirrels are busy getting their breakfasts. Look at that little chap on the next tree, with his tail cocked over his back, and his bright eyes sparkling as he nibbles away at an acorn! And there is a black one—all jet black, except his little white chest! The woods here swarm with squirrels, but the black ones are very uncommon.

It is difficult to trace the stag when we set off again, for the bleeding has stopped; and at last we lose the track altogether. However, we mark the place where we found the last hoof-print, and then keep what we imagine to be the right direction. Fortunately the ground is covered with scattered trees, and we can see a long way ahead, so there is no danger of “jumping” him suddenly.

At length we spot him, lying down again, but looking provokingly wide awake. He is on a little hill, and it is impossible to get near him, so there is nothing for it but a long shot.

I fire, and he acknowledges the bullet by jumping up, and, once more galloping off, leaps over a wire fence, *five feet high*, that surrounds a plantation, and disappears among the trees!

Poor old chap! It is his last effort.

He seems very sick and sorry when we find him again—standing with his nose nearly touching the ground.

MY FIRST STAG

One more shot ; and, without a struggle, he falls
—*dead!*

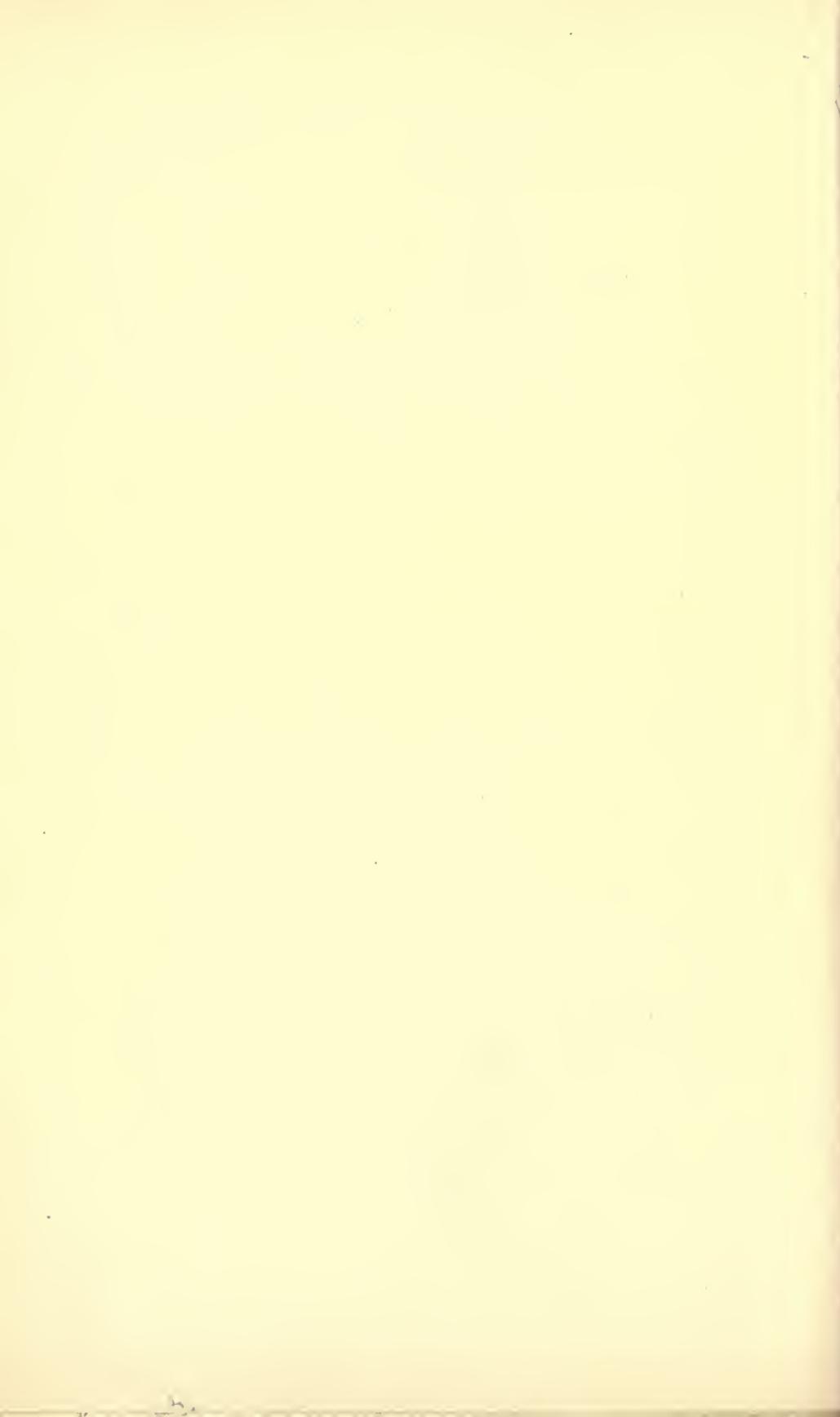
My first bullet had hit him low down in the chest ; and the second had gone through his shoulder, though too high to do much damage. Still it was an extraordinary example of the vitality of wild animals that, with those two wounds, he should not only keep on his legs so long, but actually clear a five-foot fence !

He was an odd twelve-pointer—I tried in vain (alas!) to persuade a hunting horn to hang on the apology for a sixth point that adorned his right antler—and he weighed 22 st. *clean*. His right and left antlers measured respectively 35 in. and $34\frac{1}{2}$ in., with a spread of $26\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Thus we triumphed!

But as I looked at my prize—lying lifeless among the pine trees, with the soft eyes fast glazing, and the limbs, that had once borne him so swiftly, stiff and stark—was there not beneath my feelings of joy and pride at the death of this—my First Stag—a tinge of sadness—a little ghost of a feeling of something like *remorse*?

I think so!



III

ROEBUCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA



III

Roebuck Shooting in Bohemia

“If there’s a Heaven upon this earth,
In Bohemia it lies.”

SO said Longfellow’s “Bold Bohemian.”
It was the music of his native land that
he boasted about—

“There the tailor blows the flute,
And the cobbler blows the horn,
And the miner blows the bugle
Over mountain gorge and bourn.”

One does hear a good deal of music there, certainly. Generally it proceeds from a wheezy old barrel-organ, that plays curious airs, which never sound properly finished off, and are intensely irritating in consequence.

To the sportsman, however, Bohemia is indeed a Paradise. The lordly red deer roams through the forests. The wild boar still roots contentedly in the swamps. The great capercailzie sits in spring upon some favourite pine-tree, and goes off into his annual fits of passion ; whilst the blackcock makes

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alternate love and war among the birches. Pheasants strut through every covert, and hares and partridges swarm on the plains. And besides all these there is the roebuck.

This graceful little deer is abundant throughout the Austrian Empire. According to the Government statistics, 68,110 roe were killed in Austria (not including Hungary) in the year 1894. In 1895, 13,118 roe deer were shot in Bohemia alone. Of these numbers, by far the greater proportion are bucks, as to kill a doe is considered a most unsportsmanlike proceeding; and it is safe to assume that nine out of every ten bucks are shot with a rifle.

The different estimation in which the roebuck is held on the Continent, to what it is in our own country, must have struck every sportsman who has been fortunate enough to shoot on the other side of the Channel. And I think that every one who has stalked a roebuck in the Austrian forests, and partaken of the delicious *Rehbraten* afterwards, will agree with me that, in this case, our insular prejudice is wrong!

The roebuck, as most people are aware, is the smallest of European deer; and, unlike the red and fallow deer, is never found in large herds. To say, however, as some writers of popular natural histories have done, that "it is strictly monogamous," and that the buck remains true to the doe for life,



Photo by OTTOMAR ANSCHÜTZ.]

A YOUNG BUCK.

[Bertini, W. Früher Lissa].

ROEBUCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

is entirely incorrect. It is a woodland animal, though it by no means despises a visit to a neighbouring cornfield during the night.

The colour of the roebuck varies with the season. In winter it is a dull brown, with a patch of pure white round the tail. The chin is also white, and there is a white spot on each lip; whilst the abdomen is greyish white. In summer it comes out in a new suit of warm reddish brown, and the noticeable white patch on the hind-quarters disappears.

The roebuck's horns rise straight from the forehead, and the full complement of points on each horn is three. From the base to the first tine, the horns are thickly covered with wrinkles or "pearls." (as they are called in German); and the size of these "pearls," with the height and girth of the horns, form the marks of excellence in a roebuck's "head."

The young buck possesses single spikes in his second summer, and is then known as a *Kitz-bock*. In his third summer he sports pronged spikes, and becomes a *Gabeler*; and in his fourth year, in the ordinary course of events, the third point appears, and he rises to the dignity of a *Kreuz-bock*. Horn-growth depends so largely on food, however, that it is impossible to place much reliance on the size and points of any deer's horns as to the age of the animal. After a certain age, too, all deer begin to

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

“set back.” The roebuck sheds his horns in the early part of November, and they are fully grown and clear of velvet again by the beginning or middle of the following May.

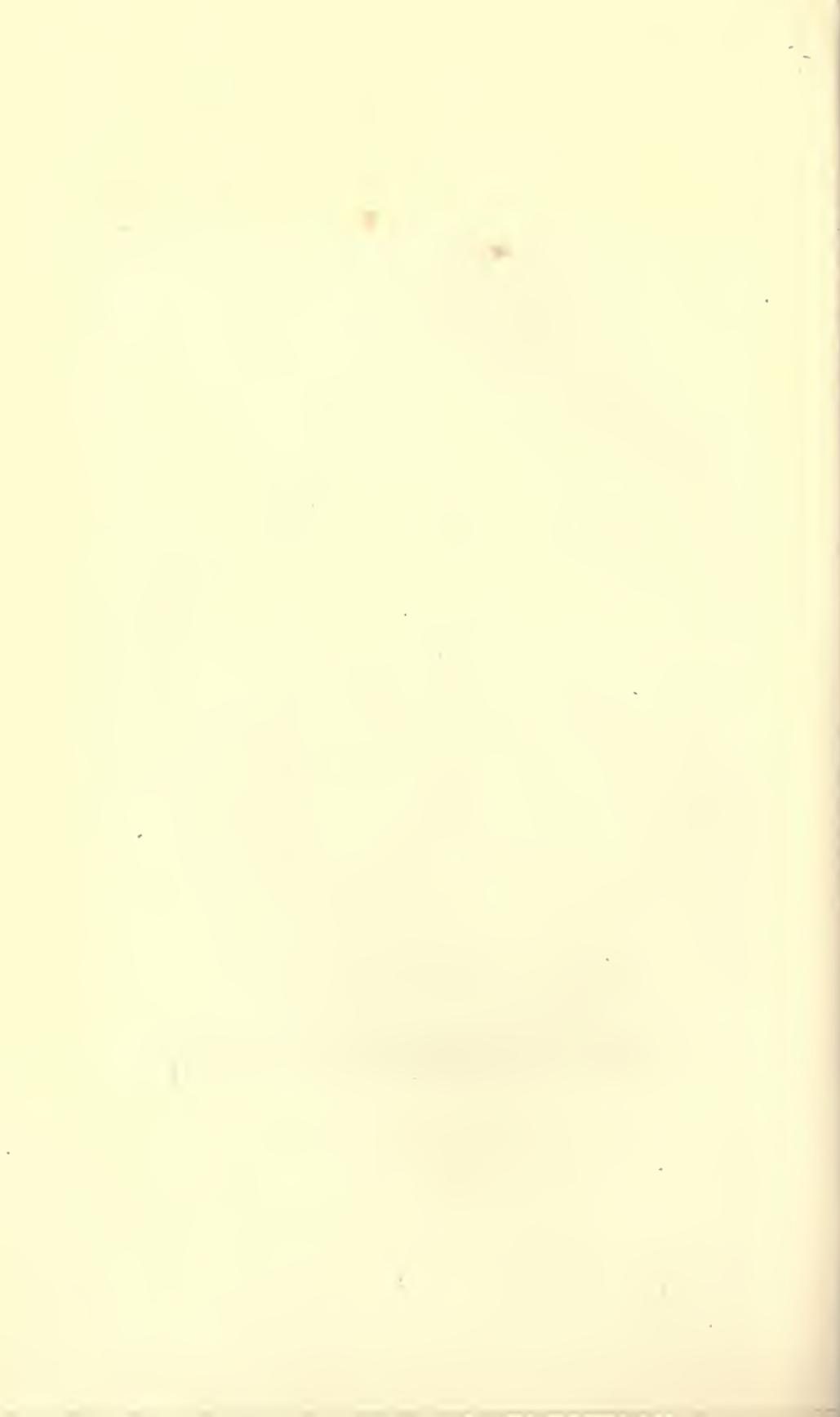
No other species of deer exhibits such irregularities, abnormities, and monstrosities with regard to its horns as does the roebuck. Malformed horns are by no means uncommon ; and one occasionally comes across a roebuck with more than three points on the horn. On a certain Bohemian estate, that I know well, there was, in one *revier* or “beat,” a celebrated buck that was said to have seven points on one horn and five on the other. Unless he has died a natural death, he is still there, for no one was ever able to get a shot at him. Personally, I have never even seen him.

Perhaps the most extraordinary malformation peculiar to the horns of the roebuck is the so-called *peruque* horn. This, which almost resembles a wig in appearance, is formed of a number of clusters of horn-growth (which when exposed, as in the illustration, is found to be very like a honeycomb), covered with velvet. In certain cases this growth spreads to a very great extent, even, in some rare instances, covering the eyes. *Peruque* horns are never shed. The cause of this curious monstrosity may be generally traced to some former injury to the animal.

The size of roebuck's horns varies with the nature



“ PERUQUE ” HORNS.



ROEBUCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

of the country and the food. In Bohemia the average height of horns, measured from base to extreme tip along the inside of the curve, is, according to my own experience, about $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches—anything over 8 inches is decidedly good.

But leaving these dull facts, which form but dreary reading, let us go and see (and shoot if we can!) the roebuck in his favourite haunts.

Imagine a lovely warm June evening, with the sun sinking slowly in the western sky. We are sitting, perched up in a *hoch-stand*—a sort of box-like construction, set on four legs, some ten feet from the ground, to which one ascends by a ladder—looking out upon a clearing in the midst of the woods. The forester has brought us here, and has left us, after arranging the green branches that screen our shelter in front, with many low bows and a whispered *Waidmann's Heil!*—*i.e.* “Sportsman’s luck,” the customary Austrian good wish. A *Kreuz-bock* is accustomed to make this his evening feeding-place, and here we are, hoping to get a shot at him.

It is strange that a buck will generally feed in the same place on six or seven consecutive evenings, and will make his appearance each day at almost exactly the same time.

How still and quiet it is here in the cool forest, with the blue sky overhead, and the golden rays of

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

the sun gilding the fresh and tender green of the young oak leaves! A golden haze hangs over the whole landscape—it is almost like a scene on the stage with a yellow lime-light thrown on to it!

There is a hare, quite close to us, nibbling away at the grass. We can see her long ears work as she listens for the approach of any enemy, and the timid way in which the great eyes glance around. She never dreams that we are just above her!

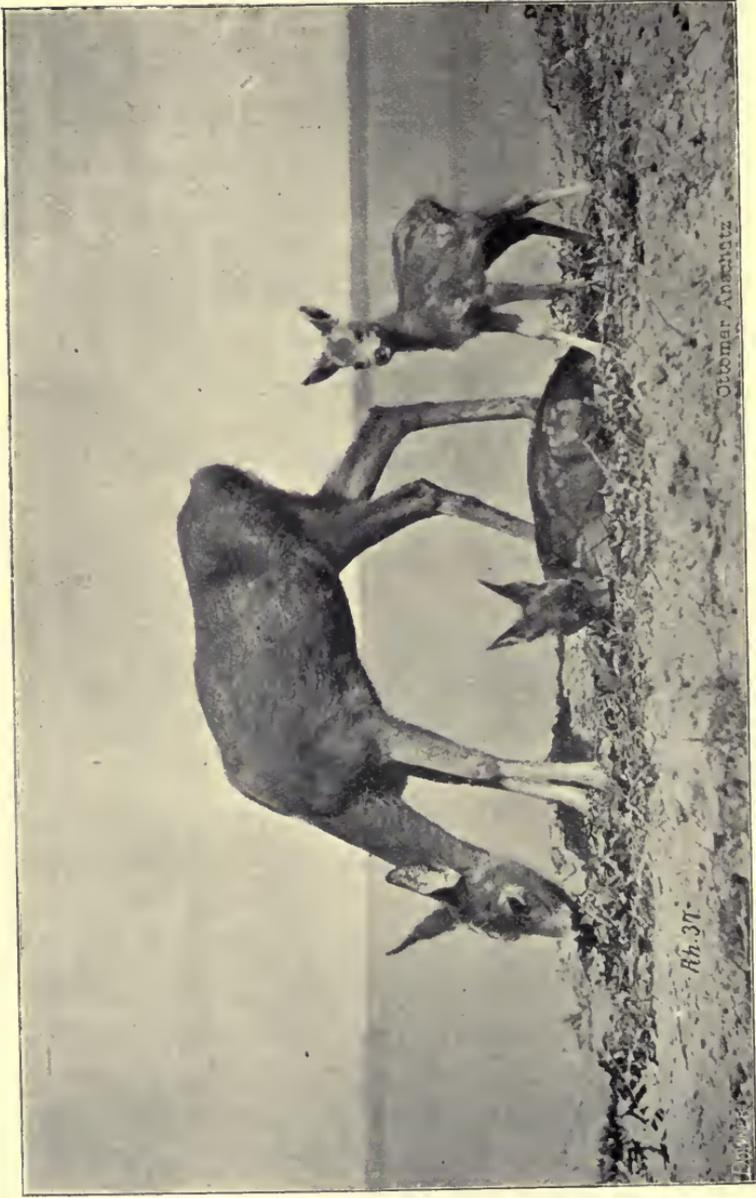
And yonder is a blackcock, enjoying himself in the sunlight, and never thinking of those poor wives of his who have to work hard to bring up their little families. A great black woodpecker, with a red head, is hammering away at a tree fifty yards on our left; and the soft and restful *coo* of the turtle-dove sounds in the depths of the wood behind us.

Here comes a roe-doe, stepping gracefully along, taking a bite here and a bite there of the young leaves. She too has a good look round for any danger every few minutes.

What a life of ceaseless watching and listening these wild animals lead!

There! she has frightened the blackcock, and he rises, and goes whirring away over the woods, whilst she jumps aside with a scared bark—for a roe barks almost like a dog when alarmed.

“Oh, it is only that stupid selfish blackcock,” she probably says to herself; “I needn’t be afraid of



Ab. 311

Ottomar Anschütz

Photo by OTTOMAR ANSCHÜTZ.]

“ANOTHER DOE AND HER TWO FAWNS WITH HER.”

[Berlin, W. Crüker Lissol.]

ROEBUCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

him," and she resumes her interrupted evening ramble.

Yonder is another doe just leaving the shelter of the wood, and her two fawns with her. What funny little things the young ones are, with their mottled skins; and how carefully the mother watches over them—stopping, waiting, even running back, if they stray more than a few yards from her side!

Can anything be more pleasant than sitting here this beautiful evening, with this picture from nature's own book before one's eyes?

Buzz-z-z! Alas! there is always a drawback to everything, however enjoyable, and in this case it is the . . . mosquitoes!

Bloodthirsty little brutes! Nothing can be more pleasant than sitting and watching half a dozen roe feeding on the oak-scrub; but nothing can be more unpleasant than sitting with half a dozen mosquitoes feeding on one's nose, and some inquisitive doe standing ten yards from one's *hochstand*, staring at it! There is nothing to be done but grin and bear it. If one brushes them off, probably the doe goes off too, *barking*, and then one's chance of a buck is small indeed. Fortunately mosquitoes do not appreciate tobacco smoke, and one can safely smoke on a *hochstand*; for if the buck scents one's smoke, he would, in any case, have scented one's self.

But it is after seven o'clock; the edge of the sun

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

is drawing near the dark fringe of pine forest on our right; the shadows are growing longer; the light is beginning to fade; and our buck ought to be appearing upon the scene.

See! What's that?

There is something moving in the wood—a roe, too, and coming our way; but there in the gloom it is impossible to see clearly, even with the glasses. It *looks* like a buck, however.

At this moment, reader, if you are a new hand at this kind of sport, you are, probably, all of a tremble—breathing in thick gasps—and your heart is beating so loud that you wonder the creature does not hear it and run away! In fact, you are suffering from a bad attack of “buck fever”!

But pull yourself together, and cock your rifle.

Yes, it *is* a buck! Look at his horns—they are half as high again as his ears, and, with the glasses, one can see the points. He is a capital fellow.

He is over a hundred yards off, so don't shoot till he gets a bit nearer—a roebuck is not a large animal at any time, and certainly a very small one at this distance!

He is gradually feeding our way—sauntering quietly along, and biting off the juiciest oak-sprigs as he comes; so we can afford to wait.

Now is your time! He has turned to reach that branch above his head, and his broad-side is towards





LOMERS

HOME!

ROEBUCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

us—it is not more than sixty yards. Aim half-way up the body, and just behind the shoulder—steady does it!

With the crack of your rifle the scene of peacefulness is at an end—the hare has left us in a hurry—the does are making off in all directions, with long leaps and bounds—only the buck remains, and he (let us hope) has dropped dead without a struggle.

A blast from your horn brings up our friend the forester, probably with a *heger*, or under-keeper, in attendance. The buck is examined, and his head and your shot discussed; and then, whilst the *heger* performs the last offices on the dead beast, the forester, with a low bow, and many congratulations, presents you with a sprig of oak, which you stick in your cap as a trophy. Probably, a carriage has been ordered to meet you somewhere near at hand, and the pair of fast-trotting Hungarian horses whirl you swiftly home to dinner.

Such is the favourite method of shooting the roebuck in Bohemia during the months of May and June. “There’s many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip,” however, and things do not always go right, even if the buck keeps his appointment, which he frequently fails to do. A wounded buck is almost always recovered; the roebuck is a very soft animal, and the Bohemian keepers are capital trackers.

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

“Still-hunting,” as the Americans call it, is much more sporting than sitting on a *hochstand* for an entire evening ; but the woods are generally very thick, and the roe harmonize wonderfully with the foliage. On most Bohemian estates stalking-paths are cut through the woods, and kept as free as possible of dead sticks, leaves, etc. Of course, as in all stalking, the wind is the most important consideration. It is sad to think, by the way, how strong and disagreeable the human smell must be, that all wild animals should flee from it so !

The rutting-time of the roebuck is in July, and when that season has begun, there is no reliance to be placed on the movements of the bucks. At this time the doe utters a curious little plaintive cry, and an instrument that imitates this sound is often very successful in bringing the buck.

The morning is the best time for this “blatting,” as it is called. The approach of individual bucks varies considerably. One will come slowly and noiselessly along, *stalking* the imaginary doe ; whilst another will rush along like an express train, crashing through the bushes, right up to you. This style of shooting is by no means easy — it is necessary to be a quick shot. It is worthy of note, too, that a buck missed will not be taken in again in this way for that summer at least. One must be sure also that it *is* a buck, and not a doe, that one



Photo by OTTOMAR ANSCHÜTZ]

“TO REACH THAT BRANCH ABOVE HIS HEAD.”

[Berlin, W. (Früher Lissa).

Ottomar Anschütz
Lissa, 1881-82



ROEBUCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

is shooting at ; for if one's pipe is pitched a little too high, every doe in the neighbourhood will come rushing to see whether it is *her* offspring that is in trouble. To shoot a doe is an unpardonable offence, and brings lasting disgrace on the unfortunate sportsman.

A well-known Austrian sportsman, who was out "blatting" in his own woods, tells a good story with regard to this against himself.

A few plaintive calls from his pipe brought up a big old doe, that saw him and rushed away. Continuing the attractive sounds, he saw what he imagined to be another roe-deer, creeping quietly along in his direction. From its size and general appearance, though unable to see its head, he judged it to be a good buck, and, firing, dropped it dead on the spot. To his horror, however, he found it to be an old doe—the same that he had seen before.

What was he to do? Carry the thing home himself, or summon a *heger* to carry it for him? Never! Concealment of the carcass was the only possible solution of the difficulty!

With the aid of his hunting-knife, after infinite labour, he managed to dig a grave large enough to bury the luckless animal in ; and, after carefully covering it up, he retired, rejoicing in the thought that no one would ever know of the misadventure.

Unfortunately, however, one of his *hegers* heard

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

the shot, and quietly approaching the spot, with the idea of arresting a supposed poacher, had witnessed the whole performance!

The bucks fight furiously during the rutting-season, and it is nothing unusual for one to be killed in these encounters.

I witnessed rather a remarkable battle of this kind some two years ago.

I was sitting on a *hochstand* on a large clearing, and had not been there more than half an hour, when a buck made his appearance. The moment I saw him I perceived that his horns were malformed, one being curved forwards, somewhat like the horn of that fabulous animal the unicorn, whilst the other curved backwards. As they were very small, however, and the buck himself was an undersized little beast, I spared him.

After some minutes another buck emerged from the edge of the wood, and the little fellow instantly attacked him. The new animal was nothing loth to fight, but, though a much heavier animal, was quickly put to flight. At this moment a third buck appeared. Though he was over a hundred yards away, it did not require my glasses to see that the new-comer was a very big fellow.

The small conqueror saw him as soon as I did, and made for him instantly. The big buck was quite ready for him, and the combat was long and



AN ABNORMAL ROEBUCK'S HEAD.





A SHOT FROM A HOCH-STAND.

ROEBUCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

stubborn. They advanced and retreated, feinted and parried, closed and broke apart, first one and then the other seeming to have the advantage.

At length I thought it was time for me to interfere.

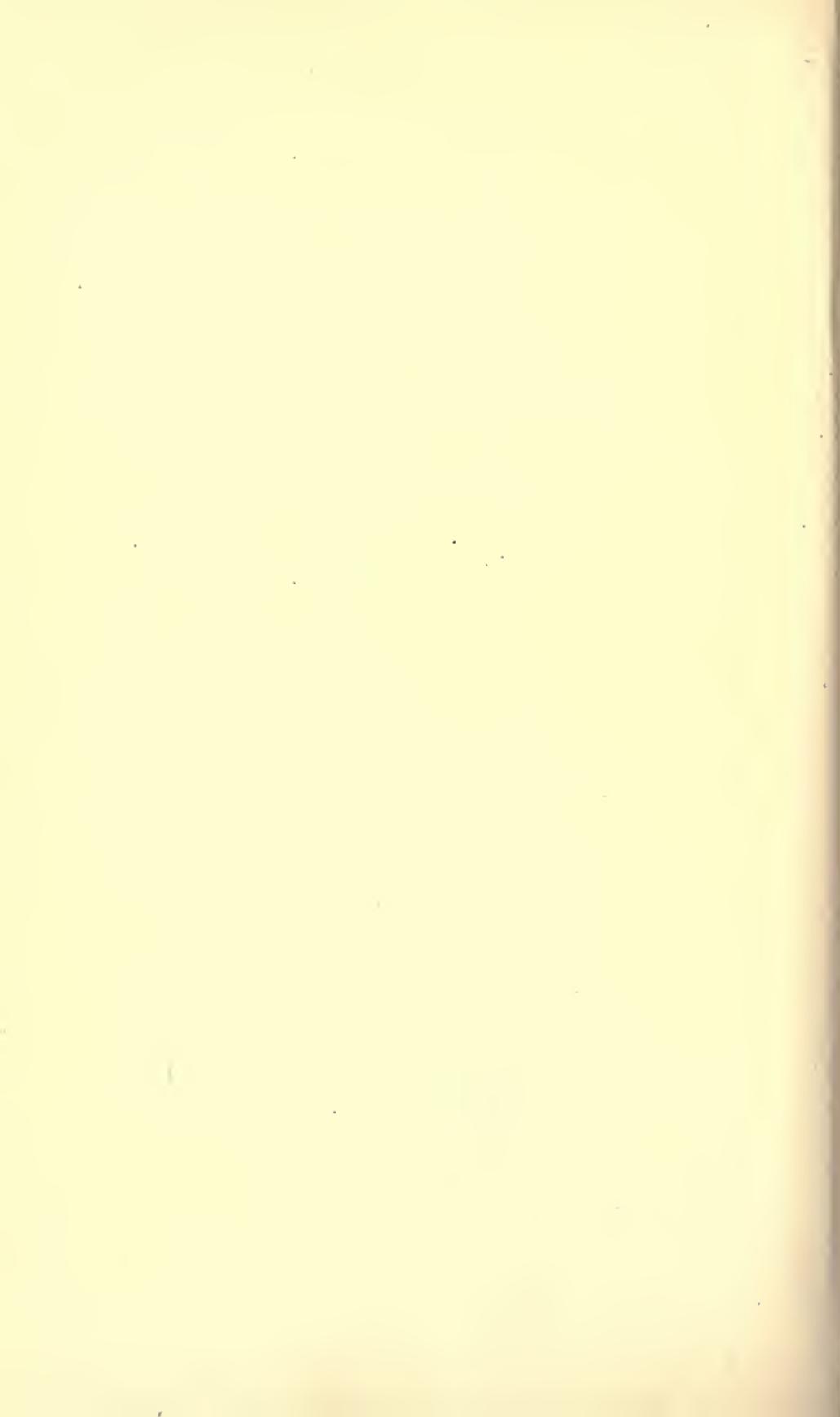
I was using a single-barrel .450 express then—a remarkably fine-shooting weapon.

Setting the hair-trigger, and taking a rest from the side of the *hochstand*, I fired at the big buck, and he dropped dead on the spot, shot through the heart.

The little *Kümmerer*, as these bucks with malformed horns are called in Austria, far from being alarmed at the report of the rifle or the death of his enemy, forthwith again attacked his fallen rival. I verily believe that he laboured under the delusion that *he* had killed his opponent.

I had to literally drive him away from the lifeless animal in the end!

This buck had the highest horns of any I have shot—they taped $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches from base to tip, measured in a straight line, without following the curve. It was a longish shot, too. I stepped the distance from the *hochstand* to the dead beast, and found it to be exactly 112 yards.



IV

A DAY'S ROEBUCK DRIVING



IV

A Day's Roebuck Driving

“Si forte fugacem
conspexit capream.”

VERGIL'S *Æneid*, x., lines 724, 725.

IN the early autumn, when the regular roebuck shooting season is over—when the bucks have begun to wander about in search of food, and have ceased to haunt one particular place for several consecutive evenings—there are generally two or three days' driving on every Bohemian estate. Probably some out-of-the-way tract of woods has not yielded up its proportion of game—there are no favourite feeding places there, perhaps, and the cover is too thick to make stalking a success; so a drive is necessary to thin down the bucks.

A drive does not mean a slaughter—far from it. Your roebuck is a wily animal, and strongly objects to be driven. He seems to realize at once that the danger lies in front, and not from the line of beaters. The does and the very young and green bucks may go forward, but not the old veteran.

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

“I have seen this game before,” he says to himself. “You don’t take me in! I’ll just stop in this thick bush, and when that line of beaters comes up to me I’ll slip back through them.”

This being so, one must not be too confident of success. One may not see a buck all day.

But let us turn over the pages of the book of memory, and take therefrom a typical day’s roebuck-driving.

It is a beautiful morning—one of those fine September days that seem to be a last remnant of summer. Still there are signs that autumn is near at hand: the heat is as great as ever, but the oaks are already tinged with red and yellow, and under the birches the fallen leaves lie thick. The air in the early morning and late evening is chilly, and the grass is drenched in dew that sparkles in the bright sunshine.

We are five guns: the Prince, our host, a fine specimen of the sport-loving Austrian, equally at home with gun or rifle, between the flags or behind the hounds; the Count, tall, elderly, and solemn, with a long grey beard that gives him an “old man of the sea” appearance; M——, short and stout, his whole figure outlined in graceful curves, with a countenance that beams with good nature like an amiable harvest moon; K——, thin and spare, a diminutive walking lamp-post; and lastly, myself.



“IN THE SOMBRE WOOD.”

A DAY'S ROEBUCK DRIVING

You are there too, reader, but it is only your "astral body," so it is not visible.

An hour's drive, mostly through dim, dark fir woods, where even the hoof-beats of the horses seem muffled in the silence, brings us to the scene of our operations.

Here we find the head forester of the *revier*, surrounded by his three satellites and a small army of beaters. The latter are all men—in walking up partridges the majority of beaters are women—but it will be hard work for them to struggle through the thick coverts, so the gentler sex would be out of place to-day.

Look at the forester—he is a good example of the Bohemian keeper. A tall, broad-shouldered man, with a bronzed and sunburnt face, keen grey eyes, and beard and hair plentifully streaked with grey. He carries a horn slung over one shoulder, and a hunting knife slung over the other, and a gun is slung over his back. His long-stemmed pipe sticks out of the pocket of his coat, the collar of which is bright green; and his hat is also green, and is decorated with a tuft of blackcock's feathers.

What strange types there are among the beaters! Do you see that little old white-haired, weak-kneed man? He is the keenest sportsman alive, and enjoys a day's beating above all things. By trade he is a tailor, and is also a red-hot republican, and

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has been under police surveillance ever since the Omladina trials!

The first drive is through a thick fir wood, dark and mossy, with the lower branches and trunks of the firs covered with grey lichen. Toadstools and bright red fungi grow plentifully under their damp shade. The Count is on the left flank of the beaters; the Prince, M——, and K—— are on the right; and I am in the centre. Come with me, gentle reader! Do not sneer at the fact that we carry shot-guns! At first sight it may seem unsportsmanlike to kill an animal as big as a roebuck with anything but a rifle; but in this sort of shooting a rifle is not a success. If we get a chance at a buck, it will probably be a snap-shot in thick cover; and besides roebucks—we spare young bucks and (of course) does—everything that comes is to be shot, capercailzie alone excepted.

It is wonderfully cool and silent in the sombre wood—a deathlike stillness, broken only by the tapping of the beaters' sticks against the trees. There doesn't seem to be much game, though!

But what is that? There is a rustling among the carpet of dead fir needles—some animal, certainly. There it is, but it is only a ruddy-brown squirrel, that darts across the grassy ride with a whisk of his bushy tail, and up a tree on the other side.

A DAY'S ROEBUCK DRIVING

The spiders' webs are a great nuisance; they hang across the ride like miniature ropes, and catch one's face at every step. It is lucky they are not stronger, or one would run a risk of committing involuntary suicide!

Two reports sound on the right, and then a chorus of shouts from the beaters warns us that something is coming our way. You catch a glimpse of some yellowish-reddish-brownish object between the fir trees. It is a roe, but a *geis*, and you leave her to go on her way unmolested. A little later another doe, with a fawn, crosses our path; and then the wood comes to an end, and the first drive is over. The Prince has shot a hare, and M—— has missed one.

The second drive is through a thick, low plantation—"certain to hold a buck," the forester assures us. The Prince and M—— are on the right flank again; the Count and K—— have been posted forward; and we are on the left.

The beaters have hardly entered the cover before a doe breaks our way; and then a tremendous whirring of wings follows, and a cock capercailzie sails over our heads. What a splendid bird he is! How the sun lights up the green and purple sheen of his glossy plumage! and how bright is the ring of vermilion round his eye! We have a good look at him, as he is only flying some ten yards from the

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

ground. He would be an easy shot—one could not miss a bird that size—but we should have to hit him in the head to bring him down. Probably he knows himself to be sacred, or he would not be so trustful.

An old cock pheasant, too, rises in a great flutter of excitement, but goes rocketting back over the heads of the beaters, unfortunately without giving us a shot.

Next a rabbit scuttles across our path, and we manage to secure Master Bunny before he reaches the safety of the other side.

No roebuck is considerate enough to appear within shot, but we have the doubtful pleasure of seeing one, in the far distance, slowly and quietly cross just behind the Count, who is intently gazing in exactly the opposite direction.

The Prince has shot one, and the Count has been tempted—has fallen—has fired at—and has missed—a capercailzie!

Another drive follows. We kill another rabbit, that rolls over into a pond, and is with difficulty fished out. We also see a polecat—he comes sneaking along a few yards before the beaters; but before we can fire with safety he dodges back, and is lost to us.

One more drive (a blank!), and then comes luncheon—not the least agreeable item of the day's

A DAY'S ROEBUCK DRIVING

programme. We are hot and tired, and half an hour's rest in the shade of the big fir trees (to say nothing of the cold chicken and ham and cooling drinks!) is very pleasant.

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods," says Byron. So there is, and more than that: there is a feeling of rest—a sense of the mighty vastness of nature—as you lie on the soft bed of fir-needles, and watch the blue smoke from your pipe as it curls upwards and upwards, and gaze through the lace-work of dark green branches overhead into the depths of the blue sky above.

But the days are growing shorter now, so it is time to go on. We are on a broad green ride, on the right flank of the line of beaters, this time. The cover is a thick, low, fir-plantation, and it is hard work for them to struggle through it, so we move forward very slowly. A doe crosses some way before us, and then a hare darts over, but we were not sufficiently wide-awake, so she escapes without a shot. Another doe follows, and then a young buck offers a tempting shot by standing on the ride and staring at us. His horns are very poor, however, so we resist the temptation, and it flees from us—or rather the buck does!

But now there is tremendous excitement among the beaters, and the *heger* who forms the "outside right" of the line bursts out of the cover with a

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

torrent of Bohemian. We do not understand his language, but we do his signs—he is pointing back into the cover and urging us to something, and to be quick about it! It must be a buck that has broken back!

Yes, there he is, or, to be more correct, there are his horns showing every now and then above the young firs. He is a long way off, and it is but a snap-shot at moving fir branches; but here goes! Two of the beaters are rushing back, and the *heger* also dives into the cover. Have we got him?

They have reached the place now, and have stopped. . . . Now they are coming back, and are carrying something. Hurrah! they have him!

A roebuck is but a soft animal, and he has got the full charge of No. 4 shot just behind the shoulder. He is a very old gentleman, and carries a capital head.

We take three more drives, kill three or four more rabbits and hares, miss one or two others, see several does, and that finishes the day.

Two roebuck, four hares, and nine rabbits make up the total "bag"—not a very large one, you may say!

No, perhaps not; but after all the days of big bags are not always the most sporting, or the pleasantest to look back on in future years. There is an immense charm in a day in the woods—when

A DAY'S ROEBUCK DRIVING

the sun is shining brightly in a cloudless sky, and its rays are lighting up the trunks of the fir-trees, and forming here and there golden patches on the green moss ; when you see the birds and the beasts in their native haunts ; when there is a glorious uncertainty as to what kind of game may appear next even if you do kill little or nothing.

V
ON THE PLAINS

On the Plains

THE first of August is the date on which the shooting season proper — that is to say, partridge, pheasant, and hare shooting—legally opens in Bohemia. As a matter of fact, it is generally the middle of the month before the young partridges are big enough and sufficiently strong on the wing to shoot; and the pheasants and hares are invariably left until the autumn, when the leaves have fallen from the trees and the first frost has come to remind us that summer is a thing of the past and winter well on its way.

The “little brown bird” of the Bohemian plains is, to the ordinary observer, identically the same as the English partridge. Ornithologists detect a trifling variation in the plumage; but it is so slight as to be imperceptible to any one but an expert.

Partridge driving, according to our system, is practically unknown. In many places low covers (known as *remisen*) are planted as shelters in the midst of the fields, and into these the birds from the

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

surrounding country are driven ; but they are never shot as they come in, being allowed to settle quietly, and then "walked up." No doubt the fact that Bohemia is destitute of fences—the only landmark between the fields being generally the change of crop, or, at the most, a ditch—militates somewhat against driving ; but, on the other hand, many heath-lands in Norfolk and Suffolk are equally bare, where driving is successfully carried out, the "guns" being either placed in pits, or behind shelters formed of a couple of hurdles. The present system of "walking up" is very pleasant whilst it lasts ; but, naturally, after a fortnight or so, the season is over, the birds becoming so wild that it is impossible to get near them.

But to turn to partridge-shooting as it *is* carried on in Bohemia, rather than as it might be !

Picture a vast plain, sweltering beneath an August sun. Stiff rows of plum-trees, affording but the smallest minimum of shade, line the dusty roads, and here and there intersect the fields. The country—its surface chequered by the various crops like a patchwork counterpane—lies dull, flat, and uninteresting. One village resembles another—a collection of low-roofed, whitewashed houses, one-storied, and built of wood many of them ; a whitewashed church with a single bell hanging in the turret ; a public-house—possibly two or three—or

ON THE PLAINS

hostinez, as it is called in Bohemia ; and a muddy pond, form the regular characteristics. Dirty, half-clothed children play in the dust ; flocks of geese occupy the roadway, and fly cackling from beneath the horse's feet as one drives along ; and a troop of mongrel curs pursue every vehicle with angry barking. The landscape is monotonous, to say the least of it. The tall chimneys of an occasional sugar *fabrik* are the only landmarks to meet the eye. Such is the country over which one shoots the partridge.

But though the scenery is far from picturesque, there are many features of interest in the sport itself, especially to a foreigner. The day's arrangements are carried out with much more formality than with us. The long line of beaters advances and halts, turns and wheels, in obedience to bugle calls, with soldier-like precision. The military effect is heightened by the distinctive dress of the keepers. Each landowner has his own livery. Coat and trousers of green, grey, or brown ; a green coat-collar and waistcoat ; high boots, reaching to just below the knee ; and a soft hat, decked with a tuft of feathers, or some other trophy of the chase, form the keeper's costume. An ornamented cartridge-bag and a horn are slung over his shoulders ; add to these impedimenta a gun, a walking-stick, a long-stemmed pipe, and a dog in a leash, and it may be understood that

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

each individual has (in more senses than one) his hands full!

What first strikes an Englishman is the immense number of beaters. On arriving at the scene of operations, he will be astonished to see an army of two or three hundred peasants, mostly barefooted women and girls. A Bohemian woman, though generally the reverse of beautiful, is always a picturesque object. Her dress consists of a short skirt of yellow, red, or blue, with a bright-coloured bodice, and a gorgeous handkerchief tied round her head. However dirty and ragged they may be, these peasants never look *tawdry*, for the reason that they always wear their own simple dress, and never the cast-off clothing of their social superiors.

The multi-hued line, extending over half a mile or more of country, the puffs of white smoke that issue at intervals along its length, the horn-blowing, the shouts of the keepers in their strange-sounding native tongue, the rich green of the beet, through the dense tops of which one tramps knee-deep, the far-stretching horizon, quivering in the fierce heat of a broiling August day—together form a great contrast to the surroundings in a day's partridge-shooting at home.

But let us take a glimpse at the winter sport, when hares and not partridges are our game, and the plain lies bare and barren in the nip of the

ON THE PLAINS

biting frost, or dazzling white in its robe of fresh-fallen snow.

The beaters are as numerous as in the summer, but their appearance is very different, for they are muffled up to withstand the cold, and fur caps and gloves are general. The men, too (and sometimes the women) keep taking surreptitious pulls at certain small bottles which they produce from the innermost recesses of their clothing, and which contain *slivovitz*, a fiery spirit distilled from the juice of a small black plum.

Let us suppose that a *feld-kreis*, or field-drive, is about to take place. From a certain point two lines of beaters, with a "gun" every three hundred yards or so, diverge right and left, and, walking in Indian file, each detachment describes a half-circle, thus forming a ring usually of some two miles in diameter. In the centre of the circle waves a flag upon which the whole line is to converge.

And now the order to advance, passed from keeper to keeper by the aid of the ubiquitous horn, comes. Every now and then a hare rises from its "form," and steals away, generally out of range. For the first quarter of an hour or so one hardly gets a shot. But wait! Gradually the circle lessens. Hares that have been roused on the other side of the ring begin to make their appearance—some with ears laid back, and body stretched out to its full extent,

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

as they gallop for all they are worth, others coming slowly and quietly along, and sitting up, from time to time, to look round for a way of escape. Poor things! Sooner or later they almost all come to the guns. Now and then one will boldly charge the beaters—the best chance for safety, if only they all knew it. Sometimes a covey of partridges will flash down the wind, scattering right and left, and testing one's skill to the uttermost as they rise high in the air to clear the line.

The firing grows fast and furious as the ring grows smaller, for the hares are literally in droves. Ten or a dozen hares are frequently lying dead in front of one at the same moment; and the guns become almost too hot to hold.

A blast from the horn of the head keeper at length checks the advance. The circle is by this time not much more than a hundred yards across, and firing within it would soon become dangerous, so the beaters open out, and form themselves in groups behind each "gun," thus allowing the remaining animals egress and a run for life.

In one drive of this kind five hundred or even more hares are frequently killed. There is something about it, though, not quite in accordance with one's notions of fair play, the animals being, as it were, caught in a trap from which there is no escape.

ON THE PLAINS

Hare-shooting in the woods is a very different matter. Each "gun," in this case, walks along a narrow path, or *schneise*, in line with the beaters. The ride is seldom more than a yard in width, and as the undergrowth is generally too thick for an approaching animal to be seen, it will be readily understood that the shooting is by no means easy. Sometimes the sportsman is warned by a chorus of "*pussor! pussor!*"—the Bohemian equivalent for "look out"—that something is coming his way; but often the only warning is a flash of yellow across the narrow way, which one has not the time to recognise as a hare! This is snap-shooting with a vengeance.

As in all other sports, however, it is possible to achieve the most marvellous accuracy in this style of shooting. An Austrian friend of mine, than whom no better sportsman exists, but who (by reason of his modesty) prefers to conceal his identity under the name of "the Sun"—he being so called for his unfailing geniality and cheery smile—in one *schneise* once fired forty-seven shots and killed forty-six hares! I was walking in the next path to him, and saw and counted the hares at the end of the covert.

In this woodland shooting, too, the bag consists not only of hares and an occasional partridge, but of pheasants in abundance—the good old-fashioned

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bird with no white ring round his neck, which falls with a *thud* like a diminutive capercaillie—rabbits, and woodcock, to say nothing of a stray roebuck or two thrown in.

The most solemn function comes at the end of a day's shooting, when the slain are arranged in rows neatly on the ground, and the head-keeper, hat in hand, reads out the number of each variety of game killed and the sum total, closing with a profound bow and a "*Waidmanns Heil*," to which the sportsmen reply with "*Waidmanns Dank*." On some estates it is customary to blow the death-song of the various beasts and birds, and also to announce what each *jäger* has himself shot.

Many Austrian hosts give what they consider to be the best place throughout the day to the guest of the highest social rank—a proceeding rather apt to lead to a certain amount of jealousy. Sometimes it happens, however, that the favoured individual is by no means the best shot, and, far from being the *jagd-könig* (as the sportsman who kills the most is called), even fails to hold his own.

An amusing incident once occurred at the end of a day's covert-shooting. A certain gentleman of high rank, who had enjoyed the best position throughout the day, had fired off a tremendous number of cartridges with but very poor results. This placed the head-keeper in a very delicate position.

ON THE PLAINS

To announce the decidedly meagre score of the august sportsman was not to be thought of! Approaching one of the other guests, and drawing him aside, he whispered: "Pardon me, but have you any objection to my adding forty of your hares and thirty of your pheasants to ——'s total?" "Do it by all means," replied the other guest; and, as two or three more sportsmen were equally good-natured, the gentleman in question thus obtained the nominal title of *jagd-könig*!

Whether he fondly imagined that he had killed all the game that he was credited with, or whether he knew that the obliging keeper had "doctored" the figures, I cannot say.

VI

BLACKCOCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

Blackcock Shooting in Bohemia

TO be dragged out of bed at two o'clock on a chilly April morning ; to walk or drive for an hour or two to a clearing in the woods, where one sits, shivering with cold, until daybreak ; all for the sake of potting a bird sitting on the ground, does not sound to the uninitiated very inviting.

But, unexciting as this sport may sound, there is something that renders it intensely fascinating. Is the trouble and discomfort entailed the secret ? Or the strange habits of the bird itself ? Or is it merely the time of day—the witching hour of daybreak—that makes one ready and eager to turn out morning after morning ?

There is a great charm in that mystic change from night to day—in seeing the grey dawn creep over the darkened landscape—in watching the stars pale and die in the stronger and brighter light of the sun—in hearing the morning song of the awakening birds, and the other myriad sounds that herald the new-born day.

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Nature is seen at her best at two periods in the twenty-four hours—sunset and dawn. And at no season of the year is she more attractive than in the spring.

The *Birkhuhn*, or “Birch-fowl,” as the blackcock is called in German, takes its name from the fact that a birch-copse is one of the most favourite haunts of the bird. A *jäger* proverb has it, too, that the mating season, or *Balzen*, of the blackcock, comes with the first tender buds that adorn the silvery-stemmed “Lady-of-the-wood.”

No bird possesses more curious characteristics than the blackcock. From the time when he forsakes the maternal wing (paternal authority never troubled him!) the young *Birkhuhn* entirely eschews female society. In the autumn he joins a little band of bachelor friends, and passes the winter comfortably and happily in their companionship. But, with the last week of March, the ladies begin to exercise their influence, and love casts the apple of discord among the hitherto peaceable community.

The blackcock then betakes himself, at the first streak of dawn, to some open glade or clearing, where he shows off his glossy plumage, warbles his inharmonious love song, and fights desperately for the possession of the soft grey-plumaged hens who sit quietly by, watching the conflict.

There is nothing more ludicrous than the antics of

BLACKCOCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

the cock bird during his courtship. With a long-drawn "Psh—ar—r," he will leap a foot in the air—a proceeding that is repeated five or six times, at intervals. Then, with trailing wings, outstretched neck, and every feather tremulous with excitement, he utters a curious *gobble*, turning slowly round and round meanwhile. This "gobble" usually lasts some five to ten seconds, and during these few moments the blackcock is, to all appearance, absolutely blind and deaf. A gun may be fired off within a few paces of the bird, and he will remain quite unheeding. On a favourite *Balz-platz* half a dozen cocks will frequently assemble, and a lively rough-and-tumble fight invariably follows the meeting of two rivals. The blackcock does not mate, in the ordinary sense of the word, as, the breeding season once over, he forsakes completely his numerous wives, leaving the hatching and rearing of the young broods entirely to them.

The events in connection with the shooting of my first blackcock stand out as plainly in my memory to-day as on the morning when they occurred. Thus it will be the slaying of this particular bird that I shall here describe to give some idea of this form of Bohemian sport.

It was the morning of the 25th of March, 18— (never mind how many years ago!), when my alarum going off, with a sound that would have

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

awakened the dead, warned me that it was three o'clock and time to get up. It is dangerous, on such an occasion, to remain a second longer in bed, or the delightful sense of going to sleep again will begin to steal over one ; so slowly and reluctantly I crept forth, wondering as I did so, in a drowsy sort of way, if it was worth the candle to leave one's warm bed at that unearthly hour to go out and shoot such an everyday sort of creature as a blackcock. By the time I had dressed, eaten a crust of bread, and swallowed a nip of brandy to keep out the morning cold, I had come to the conclusion that it was—quite; and, as my host and I drove through the inky blackness of the forest, with the light from the carriage lamps casting weird shadows among the pines, I had made up my mind that three o'clock was, in reality, the only sensible hour for rising!

Half an hour later saw me ensconced in a *schirm*, or shelter of fir-branches, on a forest clearing. Sable night still brooded over the Bohemian plain, and, as I struck a match to light another pipe, I saw that it was but a quarter-past four—half an hour yet to wait before the faintest glimmer of light betokened the coming day.

What a strange hush lies upon everything at that hour of the morning! The air hangs heavy and motionless; the trees stand in silent dark masses,

BLACKCOCK SHOOTING IN BOHEMIA

only slightly blacker than the sky ; the moon has sunk below the edge of the horizon ; and the stars shine but dimly and faintly. Not a cry from bird or beast disturbs the stillness. All Nature seems breathless—awaiting the dawn ! One must have passed this hour in a forest or on the mountains before one knows what silence means !

It was bitterly cold work sitting there that March morning, and I was more than glad that I had brought with me, from the carriage, the fur-lined *fuss-sack*—a sort of bag into which one gets bodily, and which reaches almost to the armpits—without which no Austrian would think of driving, during the winter months.

Far away in the forest an owl hooted. It was the first sound I had heard, and, breaking in as it did on the weird stillness, it seemed almost like a burst of demoniacal laughter.

A sickly grey light glimmered in the east, and objects near at hand began to loom up through the semi-darkness. Patches of unmelted snow flickered ghostlike through the gloom.

A partridge called in the distance ; and then a rush of whirring wings, and the sound of a heavy soft body settling on the ground, warned me that the first blackcock had arrived at the trysting-place. A low “cluck, cluck” followed, and soon more whirring of wings and several “dumps” betokened

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new-comers. Noiselessly I slipped the cartridges into my gun, and strained my eyes and neck in the attempt to make out one old fellow who began to "Psh—ar" just behind me.

Gradually the light grew stronger. Here and there I could dimly discern a dark spot on the ground, which looked as if it might be a bird. The clucking and gobbling told me, too, that two or three cocks, at least, were in my immediate neighbourhood; but still it was far too dark to shoot.

It is at such times as this that one is always possessed with a strong desire to sneeze, or cough, or scratch oneself! The suspense of sitting perfectly motionless was dreadful, and my legs both went to sleep.

But now the stars had, one by one, glimmered and gone out; and grey morning had really come. The eastern sky blushed in the first rays of the morning sun, and all Nature was awake. A roebuck, his horns covered with velvet and but half grown, trotted shadow-like across the clearing; and a hare stole forth, and began to feed not ten yards from my ambush. I could see three blackcock at varying distances, but all out of shot, before me; and sharp angry clucking warned me that two rivals were engaged in a desperate struggle in my rear.

How to turn round—that was the question.

Slowly I twisted round on my seat, and with infi-

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nite precautions at length managed to get a sight of the battle.

The combatants were hopping round one another, when I first spied them, each one evidently bent on securing some advantage in the attack. Now they would advance, now retreat, then both would leap a foot or so into the air, and all the time the clucking and gobbling went on without intermission. At length they clinched, and went at it—beak, wing, and claw. I might with good luck have killed them both with one shot, but it was my first morning with the blackcock, and I was anxious to see the end of this strange battle.

A fierce fight of a minute or so's duration, and then I could see that one of them was evidently getting the worst of it. For a few seconds more he defended himself, and then, breaking away, he rose from the ground, and went whirring away over the forest—defeated!

My turn came next. The first rays of the sun were penetrating the morning mist, as I poked my gun barrels through a hole in my shelter—lighting up the glowing black plumage of the victor as he triumphantly “gobbled” before the gaze of his admiring wives.

I took him sitting—I confess it!—or rather turning, for he was revolving on his own axis like a humming-top.

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When the smoke of my shot had cleared, a few feathers were floating down the morning breeze, and there in the sunlight, on the scene of his recent victory, lay my first blackcock.

VII
AN AUTUMN PICTURE

VII

An Autumn Picture

“Good-bye, Summer!”

—*G. J. Whyte Melville.*

AUTUMN is perhaps the most beautiful season in Bohemia. The sun shines his brightest, the skies are their bluest, and the trees of the forest seem to vie with each other in the rich and gorgeous colouring of their foliage: Only the firs remain dark, sombre, and unchanged—like old staunch friends, ever and always the same!

And yet there is something particularly sad about autumn. The summer is dead, and bleak cold winter is coming, and everything is changing. One feels almost grateful to the firs that they at least do not alter!

So it is in life. There comes a season—not necessarily when one is past middle age; it comes (alas!) to many in youth—that one may call its autumn!

It is when everything that made life joyous and bright has gone out of our lives—when that golden dream that you have cherished so long has faded

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

away—that fairy bubble has burst—that castle in the air, that you took such pleasure in building up, has come toppling down about your ears—and there is nothing left but nothingness—the blank weary long winter of life! Some call it disillusion, or it may be called the death of hope. To most of us it comes sooner or later—and God help each one of us when it does come!

But let us go out into the woods this fine autumn evening. Here is some cultivated land in the middle of the forest, and this patch of clover is a favourite feeding-place for the roe—we may get a shot at a buck perhaps. There is a *schirm* just at the edge of the wood, a shelter of fir branches with a seat in it, where we can sit and watch without being seen.

The sun is sinking slowly behind the high wood on our right, sinking in a soft haze, that veils the dark forest before us in blue vapour. Not a breath of wind stirs the great trees that rise heavenwards—the oaks yellow and red with their changing foliage; the firs ever the same sombre green—against the blue sky. Overhead the squirrels are clicking and chattering, as they gather their stores of acorns that are to last them through the coming winter—busy little toilers, with their bushy tails and bright, black, beady eyes. How they swear when an acorn slips from between the nimble paws, and



Photo by OTTOMAR ANSCHÜTZ.]

“A DOE, AND IN HER WINTER COAT.”

[Berlin, W. (Früher Lissa).]

AN AUTUMN PICTURE

comes crashing down among the withered oak leaves! A jay utters its harsh scream in the woods behind us; and a flight of rooks sail over our heads, cawing as they go, their black wings moving lazily in their homeward flight. A cock pheasant crows lustily, and then repeats the cry, as if to let us know he is there—a conceited bird; but doubtless his wives think what a fine fellow he is as he struts among them with his glossy green head and radiant plumage! A covey of partridges are calling to each other among the clover. But these sounds of nature seem to merely deepen, not disturb, the silence of the evening.

Ah! here is the first roe—a doe, and in her winter-coat. The pretty ruddy colour of the summer months has changed to a dark brown, with a white patch on the hind-quarters. It seems strange, when one first thinks of it, that the colour of an animal should change completely with the time of year; but look carefully at a roebuck in the woods at the different seasons, and you will see the reason. That ruddy coat of summer harmonizes perfectly with the trunks of the firs—themselves ruddy in the rays of the sun that come filtering through their branches; or melts into the background of scrub-oak so well, that it is only after some minutes' consideration that one is sure one sees an animal at all. And in winter, when the fir trees are dark

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

and damp with the melting snow, the dark winter coat matches exactly with their colour. Truly Nature is bountiful to her children, and uses her best endeavours for their protection! And men see (or rather do *not* see) such things every day, and then doubt the existence of a ruling Power!

But here are four more roe, trotting out, one after the other, from the shelter of the wood. They must be a family party, these four; the mother, and her two young ones of this year, and an elder sister perhaps, who has not yet set up housekeeping on her own account. There is another doe further off; and there is another . . . and another! Nine roe on this patch of clover, but not a buck among them! It is a ladies' evening party, possibly—the presence of gentlemen strictly prohibited. How gaily the fawns jump and frisk about, playing with each other; whilst the staid matrons, sobered by their weight of years and family cares, feed quietly—keeping a constant watch, however, for any threatened danger. They are blissfully unconscious of *our* presence.

There comes a buck! Even in the fading light and at this distance—for he is a good hundred yards away—one can see the shorter face, thicker neck, and more compact build than that of the doe; and, with the glasses, one can make out his horns distinctly.



Photo by OTTOMAR ANSCHÜTZ.]

A BUCK.

[Berlin, W. (früher Lissa)]



TWILIGHT.

AN AUTUMN PICTURE

With almost all animals (and birds and insects too, in most cases) Nature seems to bestow the greater beauty upon the masculine gender. Certainly a buck's head is far prettier than a doe's. Is it ungallant to say so?

But we are not fated to have a shot at him. As he saunters leisurely out into the open a covey of partridges comes whirring over the clover, and the buck, scared by the rush of wings, with a deep bark, turns and vanishes again in the depths of the wood.

Bad luck, you say?

After all it would have been almost a pity for the crack of the rifle to have disturbed the quiet of the evening, and to have taken the life of the most graceful creature in the picture!

And now the twilight has come, and the shadows are falling fast about us. Far in the west the evening star hangs trembling in the last faint glow of the sunset; and from a distant village the sound of the Angelus is borne faintly on the little breeze that is springing up.

“Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!”

We can see no longer—the roe are now but dark blurs in the gathering gloom—let us go!

VIII
THE PHANTOM ROEBUCK



VIII

The Phantom Roebuck of the Dismal Pool

I AM not superstitious—far from it! I have never been a believer in either ghosts or goblins, wraiths or apparitions; and nothing of that kind had ever troubled me, until—but there! let me begin the story from the beginning.

I was staying at L—, a castle in Bohemia, a place where I have spent some of the happiest days of my life, and the woods round which I know as well as any keeper on the estate. It was the beginning of July, and I had but arrived from England the day before.

“You had better have a go at the roebucks,” said my host to me, after that mid-day meal which we term luncheon, but the Austrians call breakfast. “The keeper says that there’s a good buck coming out by the Dismal Pool.”

“Right you are!” I said; “I’ll try and get a shot at him this evening.”

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

It had been a remarkably hot day, with not a breath of wind to cool the heated atmosphere ; and it seemed more sultry than ever as I set out, my trusty rifle slung on my back in the Continental fashion. Great black clouds were massed on the horizon, and there was a lurid look in the sky, that betokened a thunderstorm before many hours had passed.

Half an hour's walk brought me to the place my host had named—the Dismal Pool. There was something almost eerie about its very appearance, with its black oily-looking water, and the rotting vegetation that clothed its slimy banks. It looked the very spot for some dark crime, and indeed more than one human being had met their death there. Many years ago an under-keeper had been found floating in its stagnant depths, his head beaten in, and his face unrecognisable even to his nearest and dearest. A shadowy story had been handed down of a perversion of justice, and the execution of an innocent person, and the eventual suicide of the real murderer. In that gloomy pond, too, a poor peasant girl had sought rest and forgetfulness, within my own recollection. Small wonder that people rather avoided that bit of forest, and that the Dismal Pool possessed the reputation of being *haunted* !

On three sides dense thicket hemmed it in ; but



SCHLOSS I..

THE PHANTOM ROEBUCK

on the fourth a little glade of rough coarse grass, covered with scattered bushes, opened out; and on this stood an old crumbling *hochstand*. It still just held together, and mounting the rickety ladder, I took my seat therein.

The sky was now covered with angry-looking copper-coloured clouds, and that curious brassy light that denotes the coming storm lay upon everything. An intense stillness filled the air—not a sound disturbed the weird calm—all Nature seemed to be breathlessly awaiting the bursting of the tempest. The heat was stifling, and the perspiration poured down my face, with the mere exertion of sitting still.

At this moment I saw a sight that instantly rivetted my whole attention. A roebuck stood facing me some sixty yards away—such a roebuck as I had never before seen! His enormous horns rose high above his ears, like those of the so-called *Ur-bock* of former days—those huge heads that one sees in old German collections. In size he was far bigger than the ordinary buck, but the most extraordinary thing about him was his colour. He was of a light fulvous yellow, but a few shades removed from white!

So astonished was I at his appearance, that, for some moments, I sat breathlessly staring at him. Then as he turned and walked quietly across the

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glade, I remembered the rifle that lay across my knees. He stopped, and I had a steady broadside shot, at not more than seventy yards.

As I pressed the trigger, a fearfully vivid flash of lightning was followed instantaneously by a tremendous peal of thunder, in which the crack of the rifle was completely lost, and down came the rain in torrents. In two minutes I was wet to the skin.

Meanwhile I searched vainly for any trace of the roebuck. He had vanished as completely as if the earth had opened, and swallowed him up. Not a drop of blood—not a footprint—nothing!

Sadly and sorrowfully and dripping wet, I made my way homewards, persuading myself that I must have missed him, and that in the bursting of the storm I had not noticed him go away.

Need I say that I sat in the same *hochstand* the next evening, and the next? But it was not till a week afterwards that I saw him again.

He emerged from the same place, and I fired at him the instant he appeared; and again I shot as he crossed the glade. He neither faltered, nor hurried his pace, and disappeared as if by magic.

Once more I sought eagerly for some trace of him, but without result. I could have cried with sheer vexation of spirit!

Of course, as is the way of most people on such occasions, I blamed my rifle for these failures. So





THE DISMAY RIVER

DOWNER

THE PHANTOM ROEBUCK

the next morning I fired some dozen shots at a target. To my surprise the rifle shot perfectly.

That evening I persuaded my host to go to the Dismal Pool, whilst I went in exactly the opposite direction. I saw and stalked a good buck, got up to within fifty yards of him, found that I could only get a clear shot at his head, and so fired at that, and dropped him dead in his tracks. That comforted me not a little, as I was beginning to think (though this went sorely against the grain) that my own bad shooting might have something to do with the former misses!

My host and I arrived at home at almost the same time, and he told me the following story. He went to the Dismal Pool, and waited there, not on the *hochstand*, but behind a pile of wood that had been cut and left at the edge of the little glade. The buck came, and stood forty yards away. He took a rest from the pile of wood, had a perfectly steady shot, and missed!

Let me here remark that my host was (and is) a first-rate shot with both gun and rifle.

And now the thought began to arise in my mind that there was something about this roebuck *not quite canny!*

Every evening for another week I sat on the *hochstand* by the Dismal Pool, without a glimpse of him.

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

And then I saw him again!

It was a lovely sunny evening, and the forest seemed basking in the golden sunlight. Only the Dismal Pool lay dark and sombre, like a great blot in the midst of a sea of billowy green. The harsh croaking of frogs arose from its black waters, but save for their discordant clamour there was no sign of life. No water-fowl rested on its surface, no fish swam in its depths—the very frogs were loathsome, slimy creatures, that seemed to cast malignant glances from their staring eyes. It was as if some evil influence hovered round the spot, and spread itself to me, for I shivered as I sat there, in spite of the summer heat.

I had my eyes fixed on the place where he had appeared before, but I never saw him come. One second and there was nothing but the sunlight on the glade, and the long blue shadows cast by the scattered bushes—the next, he stood there, in the middle of the bright sunshine!

And then I saw something that made my blood run cold! *He seemed to have no shadow!* The rays from the setting sun shone where the shadow should have been, as if no animal of solid flesh and blood was there!

Was I dreaming, or was the whole thing an hallucination? I shut my eyes, and then looked again. At this moment a light fleecy summer cloud

THE PHANTOM ROEBUCK

passed over the face of the sun, and for a few seconds the whole bit of open ground lay in the shade. I could not be sure if my vision had deceived me!

Slowly the roebuck passed on, his head always turned in my direction, and then he halted again in front of a small oak sapling.

My rifle was at my shoulder, and, the moment he stopped, I pressed the trigger.

A crack—a cloud of smoke—and the roebuck had gone—vanished instantly—as suddenly as he had come, so he went!

I rushed to the spot. Yes, there was the track of my bullet—it had passed completely through the tree, but to do so it must have first passed through the animal's shoulder! There was no doubt of it—it was just the right elevation.

Of course I should find the roebuck lying dead a few yards away—so I told myself; but somehow I felt that *it was impossible to kill that beast!*

I looked, but I knew my search would be in vain; I found nothing.

I blew my horn with all my might, and I was really glad to hear an answering blast close at hand. Somehow I disliked to be alone.

The next moment the head forester and an under-keeper came up, and to them I told my story.

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

It was with an air of mystery that both men listened, and, when I had finished, I noticed the quick questioning way in which the *heger* looked up at his superior. The forester merely shrugged his shoulders, but he, too, cast a startled glance at the Dismal Pool. It was as if both men knew something which they would not speak of.

We looked vainly about for some trace of the beast; and then we parted.

But before I had gone many yards I found the *heger* at my elbow.

“If *the thing* you shot at had been a real live roebuck,” he muttered in broken German, “it should have been lying dead at the foot of that tree! And believe me, sir, it were better not to come again to this cursed pool!”

Then he turned and left me.

Need I say I went there again? But I never saw that roebuck afterwards!

IX

SOME SHOOTING STATISTICS

IX

Some Shooting Statistics

IT may not be generally known that the Austrian Government keeps a careful record of the game shot throughout the Empire. Such is, however, the case. Naturally, the numbers given are rather below than above the mark, for poachers furnish no returns of their successes—not even for the sake of the accuracy of the Imperial registers.

Some of these statistics may prove of interest to English readers. The first table, which is taken from the *Allgemeine Sport-Zeitung* of February 21st, 1897, gives the total game killed in one year in the dual monarchy—the first column being the game list for Hungary for the year 1894 ; the second, the game list for Austria for 1892.

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

LIST OF GAME KILLED IN AUSTRIA-HUNGARY IN ONE YEAR.

	Hungary, 1894.	Austria, 1892.
Red Deer	3,836	12,385
Fallow Deer	1,022	2,788
Roe Deer	13,144	68,110
Chamois	173	8,144
Mufflon	53	—
Wild Boar	4,984	3,509
Hares	558,440	1,309,688
Rabbits	31,970	95,803
Various	1,385	—
Marmots	—	647
Capercaillie	274	5,143
Blackcock	175	9,458
Hazel-grouse	5,096	10,851
Wild Turkeys	120	—
Pheasants	64,499	141,264
Partridges	190,359	1,036,836
Quail	107,740	94,995
Landrails	6,064	—
Wild Geese	3,612	1,245
Wild Duck	46,956	52,440
Waterhens	16,477	—
Ptarmigan	—	2,075
Stone Partridges	—	3,952
Bustards and Cranes	957	—
Woodcock	22,487	26,057
Snipe	9,970	14,756
Wood Pigeons	21,652	—
Thrushes	12,837	—
Various Birds	15,134	—
Total	1,139,416	2,899,453

SOME SHOOTING STATISTICS

LIST OF "VERMIN" KILLED IN AUSTRIA-HUNGARY IN ONE
YEAR.

	Hungary, 1894.	Austria, 1892.
Bears.	177	33
Lynx.	36	31
Wolves	380	69
Wild Cats	1,348	—
Otters	621	1,267
Badgers	1,891	3,870
Foxes	24,370	26,553
Martens	2,174	11,281
Polecats	7,901	30,688
Weasels	14,874	—
Various	13,136	—
Eagles and Buzzards	4,353	510
Various Hawks	47,690	101,960
Owls	9,132	29,741
Horned Owls	—	1,114
Ravens, Crows, and Magpies	172,310	—
Various Birds	28,683	—
Wandering Dogs and Cats	35,553	—
Total	364,599	207,117

The foregoing figures may be taken as those of average years.

Bohemia furnishes a large proportion of the game list for Austria, as will be seen from the following :—

LIST OF GAME SHOT IN BOHEMIA IN THE YEAR 1895.

Red Deer	2,469
Fallow Deer	1,933
Roe Deer	13,118
Wild Boar	843
Hares	410,846

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

Rabbits	30,910
Capercailzie	1,101
Blackcock	5,328
Hazel-grouse	842
Pheasants	69,735
Partridges	382,777
Quail	9,016
Woodcock	2,174
Snipe	535
Wild Geese	218
Wild Duck	15,550
Total .	<u>947,395</u>

THE "BLACK LIST" FOR BOHEMIA IN THE YEAR 1895.

Foxes	2,348
Martens	2,979
Polecats	9,724
Otters	239
Badgers	343
Weasels	105
Owls (spared on most estates) .	72
Hawks, Falcons, Buzzards, etc. .	25,312
Crows and Magpies	4,736
Total .	<u>45,858</u>

It has been suggested that the annual "bags" on some of the great Bohemian estates might prove interesting to English sportsmen. The following figures will give a good idea of the sport obtained on them. They do not, however, constitute "records," having been obtained merely for the purpose of showing the average head of game killed annually on a first-rate sporting property.

SOME SHOOTING STATISTICS

GAME KILLED ON PRINCE ADOLF SCHWARZENBERG'S ESTATE AT
FRAUENBERG, IN BOHEMIA, 1887-1895.

Year.	Red Deer.			Wild Boar.			Fallow Deer.			Mufflon.	Roe Deer.		
	Stags.	Hinds.	Calves.	Boars.	Sows.	Yearlings.	Bucks.	Does.	Fawns.		Bucks.	Does.	Fawns.
1887	31	24	29	3	52	141	41	33	12	2	208	55	10
1888	33	18	15	4	32	162	41	37	13	—	161	48	5
1889	34	36	36	5	58	217	31	44	28	3	177	46	33
1890	22	27	22	2	28	135	30	34	14	2	113	18	2
1891	30	24	40	3	42	175	35	42	16	4	150	49	11
1892	24	44	37	5	20	180	35	35	10	10	182	39	9
1893	23	19	29	4	37	210	28	26	15	10	276	74	17
1894	30	46	33	4	30	147	41	33	10	10	352	239	35
1895	21	16	20	4	26	153	40	28	12	5	231	166	84
	248	254	261	34	325	1,520	322	312	130	46	1,850	734	206
	763			1,879			764				2,790		

Year.	Hares.	Capercailzie.	Blackcock.	Pheasants.	Partridges.	Wild Geese.	Wild Duck.	Coot.	Woodcock.	Snipe.	Total.
1887	9,414	4	7	690	5,296	23	915	424	50	4	17,468
1888	7,738	7	11	477	4,353	9	902	125	37	5	14,233
1889	8,935	19	18	876	4,662	37	1,362	93	30	1	16,845
1890	7,067	9	9	677	4,219	16	1,311	156	97	3	14,018
1891	6,676	7	12	562	4,352	15	811	97	40	8	13,205
1892	7,318	7	9	1,103	3,988	75	1,193	157	105	17	14,602
1893	9,324	5	11	1,732	5,241	56	1,113	258	19	36	18,584
1894	12,050	13	19	2,291	8,599	53	878	382	62	18	25,618
1895	1,566	21	27	2,084	2,019	35	941	609	18	4	8,136
	70,088	92	123	10,492	42,729	319	9,426	2,301	458	96	142,709

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

GAME KILLED ON PRINCE CHARLES SCHWARZENBERG'S ESTATE AT
WORLIK, IN BOHEMIA, 1889-1894.

Year.	Red Deer.			Wild Boar.	Fallow Deer.			Mufflon.	Roe Deer.
	Stags.	Hinds.	Calves.		Bucks.	Does.	Fawns.		
1889	36	45	44	129	17	7	14	—	80
1890	37	33	22	109	24	12	10	—	75
1891	34	44	39	138	20	20	17	1	74
1892	55	52	33	164	20	21	16	—	74
1893	78	53	40	139	26	23	21	2	100
1894	54	74	19	141	24	37	27	—	118
	294	301	197	820	140	120	105	3	521
	792				365				

Year.	Hares.	Rabbits.	Pheasants.	Partridges.	Wild Turkeys.	Woodcock.	Duck.	Capercaillie.	Blackcock.	Hazel-grouse.	Total.
1889	4,046	1,817	4,606	6,303	34	20	172	2	11	1	17,384
1890	5,310	1,869	3,224	5,959	17	77	193	1	5	—	16,977
1891	4,167	1,900	3,832	6,601	6	23	159	2	8	—	17,085
1892	4,296	2,011	2,777	8,489	5	27	126	2	11	—	18,188
1893	5,807	885	2,654	8,973	7	5	132	4	2	—	18,951
1894	6,641	796	2,093	8,533	6	62	59	1	12	—	18,697
	30,267	9,278	19,186	44,858	75	214	841	12	49	1	107,282

SOME SHOOTING STATISTICS

GAME KILLED IN TWO SEASONS ON PRINCE HANAU'S ESTATES AT
HOROWITZ AND TINEC, SHOWING THE EFFECT OF A SEVERE
BOHEMIAN WINTER ON THE FOLLOWING SEASON.

Year.	Red Deer.			Fallow Deer.			Roe Deer.			Wild Boar.	Hares.	Rabbits.
	Stags.	Hinds.	Calves.	Bucks.	Does.	Fawns.	Bucks.	Does.	Fawns.			
1888	18	10	4	27	12	4	80	16	2	59	8,431	200
1895	7	6	2	3	6	—	58	8	2	—	1,490	35

Year.	Pheasants.	Capercaillie.	Blackcock.	Hazel-grouse.	Partridges.	Quail.	Wild Duck.	Woodcock.	Woodpigeon.	Fieldfares.	Total.
1888	1,200	16	15	5	6,900	5	6	46	2	—	17,058
1895	233	8	4	1	2,660	1	3	31	1	1	4,560

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

VERMIN KILLED ON PRINCE HANAU'S ESTATES AT HOROWITZ
AND TINEC DURING THE SAME TWO SEASONS.

Year.	Foxes.	Martens.	Polecats.	Dogs.	Cats.	Weasels.	Squirrels.	Large Hawks, as Buzzards, etc.	Hérons.
1888	19	28	40	90	400	240	600	30	1
1895	13	15	26	79	260	126	662	18	1

Year.	Sparrow Hawks.	Eggs of Spar- row Hawks.	Crows.	Eggs of Crows.	Magpies.	Jays.	Shrikes.	Kingfishers.	Total.
1888	90	2	500	50	4	100	200	4	2,398
1895	74	5	334	41	5	116	203	1	1,979

With regard to personal records, Prince Carl Trauttmansdorff, one of the best among the many crack shots and good sportsmen of Austria, has most kindly supplied the following details of his individual performances. He says: "My best day was 862 head. My greatest bag of pheasants in one day was 303; of partridges, 632; of hares, 416; of rabbits, 638; of roebucks, 12; of fallow deer, 20; of wild boar, 23; and of blackcock, 14.

My biggest stag was a twenty pointer—252 kilog.
clean.

My best year was 10,833 head.

My total bag up to to-day (December 9th, 1896) is 190,858 head; and is made up as follows:—

SOME SHOOTING STATISTICS

Wild Boar	188	Woodcock	617
Chamois	150	Snipe	98
Mufflon	6	Pheasants	24,044
Red Deer	209	Partridges	51,497
Fallow Deer	1,013	Quail	483
Roe Deer	2,409	Water Fowl	920
Hares	67,533	Vermin	3,784
Rabbits	21,005	Various	16,519
Capercaillie	169		<hr style="width: 100%;"/>
Blackcock	208		190,858"
Hazel-grouse	6		<hr style="width: 100%;"/>

A few days after receiving this letter the following extract appeared, curiously enough, in the columns of *The Standard*. I append it for the sake of comparison.

“The record of game killed by Earl de Gray from 1867 to 1895 is a most extraordinary one. Between the dates mentioned his lordship has killed 316,699 head of game, his average during the last twenty years being about 10,000 each year. His record in 1893 was 19,135, composed as under:— 8,732 partridges, 5,760 pheasants, 2,611 grouse, 837 hares, 914 rabbits, and nearly 300 various. Of the total, 316,699, there are 111,190 pheasants, 89,401 partridges, 47,468 grouse, 26,747 rabbits, 26,417 hares, 2,735 snipe, 2,077 woodcock, 1,393 wild duck, 381 red deer, 186 deer, 97 pigs, 94 black game, 45 capercaillie, 19 sambur, 12 buffaloes, 11 tigers, 2 rhinoceros, 8,424 various.”



X
TO THE MOUNTAINS

X

To the Mountains

“Away to the hills.”

—*Sir Walter Scott.*

THE Tyrol! There is something suggestive in the very name—a suggestion of massive mountains and rushing rivers, of picturesque costumes and pretty faces, of a country wild, free, romantic, and unspoilt!

There are two Tyrols, however. On the one hand that of the tourists, all mapped out and arranged in the pages of Bedaecker, with the excursions to be made, and the sights to be seen, and the hotels to be stayed in; and, on the other, the pure and unadulterated Tyrol, where that most estimable throng come not, and where one stands face to face with Nature herself. The latter is the preferable side of the picture—to me, at least.

Some half-hour's railway journey from Innsbruck, on the Vienna side, is a small station of the name of Jenbach. It is not an important place, and few people alight there; but four passengers, surrounded

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

by a pile of luggage, might have been seen standing on the platform one November evening. From the way in which one of them—a short fat man—was fussing about after the aforementioned luggage, Mr. Sherlock Holmes (if he had been there) would probably have “deduced” that he was a servant; and, from the number of gun-cases, he might have concluded that some one intended to kill something. In both deductions he would have been correct: three of the passengers were the Prince, “the Sun,” and myself; the fourth was the Prince’s manservant; and we had come there to shoot chamois.

Chamois, as most people are aware, are found in all the higher mountain chains of Central and Southern Europe. But it is in the Austrian Alps that the greatest number exist. In the whole range of the Alps some 11,000 chamois are shot every year, and of this total over 8,000 are killed in Austria.

From mediæval times a kind of superstitious halo has always surrounded this mountain antelope; for an antelope it is, and not a goat as many persons imagine. Probably more fabulous stories and quaint legends have been told, and believed in, with regard to it, than of any other beast or bird. Thus we are gravely informed, by writers of the last century, that its curved horns are largely used in the ascent and descent of the precipices among

TO THE MOUNTAINS

which it dwells ; and that it will avoid the notice of the hunter by hanging by the crooks of its horns over some ledge of rock.

The blood of the chamois was formerly considered to be possessed of valuable medicinal qualities ; and the celebrated Bezoar stone—an accumulation of hair and resinous fibre occasionally found in the stomach of the animal—was believed in as a sovereign remedy for all the ills to which mankind is heir !

In these days of excellent and popular natural histories, every one is familiar with the appearance of the chamois. Horns are common to both sexes ; but the buck's differ from those of the doe in their greater thickness at the base, and the sharper bend of the curve.

Chamois change their colour with the season. In summer they are of a greyish brown ; but in winter their coats become much longer and thicker, and are almost black. They are gregarious ; and, like all animals that are found in herds, have always a sentinel, whilst feeding, to guard their safety. The old bucks, however, prefer a solitary existence, and are only to be found with their families during the rutting season. This, with the chamois, begins as a rule in the first week of November. The buck at this time is even more exercised, perhaps, than the lordly stag in the guarding of his harem. Not

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

content with merely driving away an intending rival, he will even chase the invader down a whole mountain side, across the valley, and up the opposite peak ; to return to find the fickle ladies, over whom he rules, have most likely been abducted by other adventurous strangers ! Thus his domestic troubles are never ending.

The surefootedness of the chamois is its most striking feature. There is perhaps no more wonderful sight in Nature than to watch a herd of these animals ascend the steep face of one of the giant Alpine peaks. To the observer the rock may appear unscaleable, but the chamois leap nimbly from one projecting ledge to another, with never a slip or falter. The hind legs are longer than the forelegs, so they ascend the rocky cliffs more easily and quickly than they descend them. In descending, however, another marvellous contrivance of Nature comes into play. The hind feet possess false hoofs, which catch in every crack and crevice, and thus act as a sort of brake ; whilst the animal slides forward on the sharp hoofs of its fore-feet, which are set close together, and kept well in advance.

There is no beast better able to take care of itself than this mountain antelope. Endowed with keen sight and hearing, its scent is still far more remarkable. Any one who has participated in a chamois drive will have noticed the enormous

Photo by OTOMAR ANSCHUTZ.]

A ROE-DOE.

[Berlin. W. Vullner Lith.]



TO THE MOUNTAINS

distance at which it will get scent of the beaters. It is strange to remark, however, the difficulty that chamois (and deer too) have in making out a stationary object. The chamois is a very inquisitive animal, and when its curiosity is aroused will use every endeavour to satisfy it. An old chamois-hunter told me that on one occasion a doe, that was unable to make him out, came up and actually *smelt* his alpine-stock in her thirst for knowledge! Of course the hunter kept perfectly motionless, and the wind was blowing strongly from the chamois to him.

A startled chamois, too, always stops, after running a little distance, to look back fixedly at the object that frightened it; and even in a chamois-drive it is very unusual for the driven animals to continue their course without stopping to look about them.

We passed the night at a large roomy hotel—not “first-class,” perhaps, in the accepted sense of the expression, but scrupulously clean and comfortable. What a blessing it is to be in an old-fashioned establishment of this kind, and freed from that abomination—the modern waiter! How much nicer the waitresses look in their white aprons, and how much better one is attended to, as a rule!

At the hotel we found our fourth “gun,” the Baron, already installed. We made an early start

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

the next day in two carriages, with our luggage on the box of the one, and the fat Anton on the box of the other. It was a misty morning—great wreaths and clouds of grey vapour hung round the mountains, giving us but fleeting glimpses of their rugged and fir-clad slopes, and the giant snow-clad peaks that towered up to heaven above us.

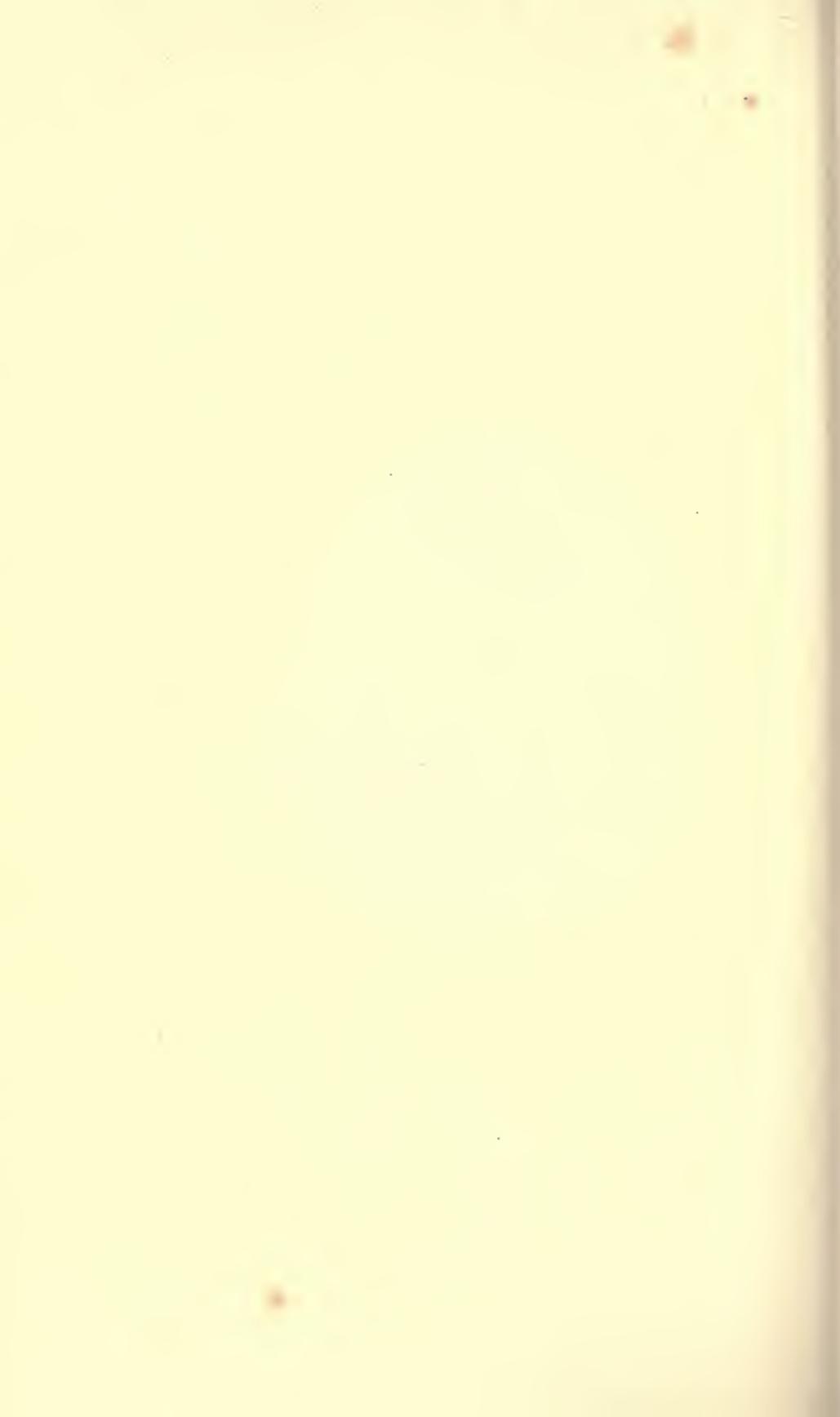
Our road lay along the Zillerthal—"the Valley of Song," as it is often called, from the musical tastes of its people—through which flows the blue-green Ziller, its waters clear and sparkling as when they left their snowy source somewhere in cloud-land.

Two hours' drive brought us to Zell, where we stopped for half an hour to rest the horses; and in another hour we were at Mäyrhofen—the last civilized place we should see before our return journey.

Luncheon was prepared for us at the house of one Anton Hochleitner, for many years the Imperial forester in charge of these mountains. A great chamois-hunter was this fine old man. Some nine hundred chamois have fallen to his rifle, in the course of his long life; but (alas!) the passage of seventy-five years leaves one too old for the mountains. Not that he thinks so, however. "I cannot come this year, your Highness, but I hope I shall be able to do so the next," he said as we left him,



ANTON HOCHLEITNER.



TO THE MOUNTAINS

and there were tears in his bright old eyes as he watched us go.

Our luggage had been taken forward—carried on the backs of some twelve or fourteen stalwart Tyrolese—our beaters for the ensuing week's shooting.

And now, accompanied by the son of old Hochleitner and another over-forester, both of them in the Imperial service, we set out for a four hours' walk to the little hut among the mountains that was to be our temporary home. I say "we," but I, personally, rode a sober, staid, chestnut pony, Bosnian as to breed, sure-footed as a mule, and rejoicing in the name of "Hansel." It was my first acquaintance with mountain sport, and our host, "the Sun," with kindly forethought, had engaged this trusty quadruped, "as he didn't want to quite kill me the first day."

Our path led upwards for more than an hour—zig-zagging through dim sombre pine-woods, under whose shade the moss grew green and luxuriant in a thick soft carpet; whilst, in the branches overhead, flocks of siskins, with their sweet low call-notes, flitted to and fro.

Then we descended towards where a brawling rivulet clattered and foamed along its rocky bed, and we afterwards followed the course of this mountain stream. Here and there we came to the

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

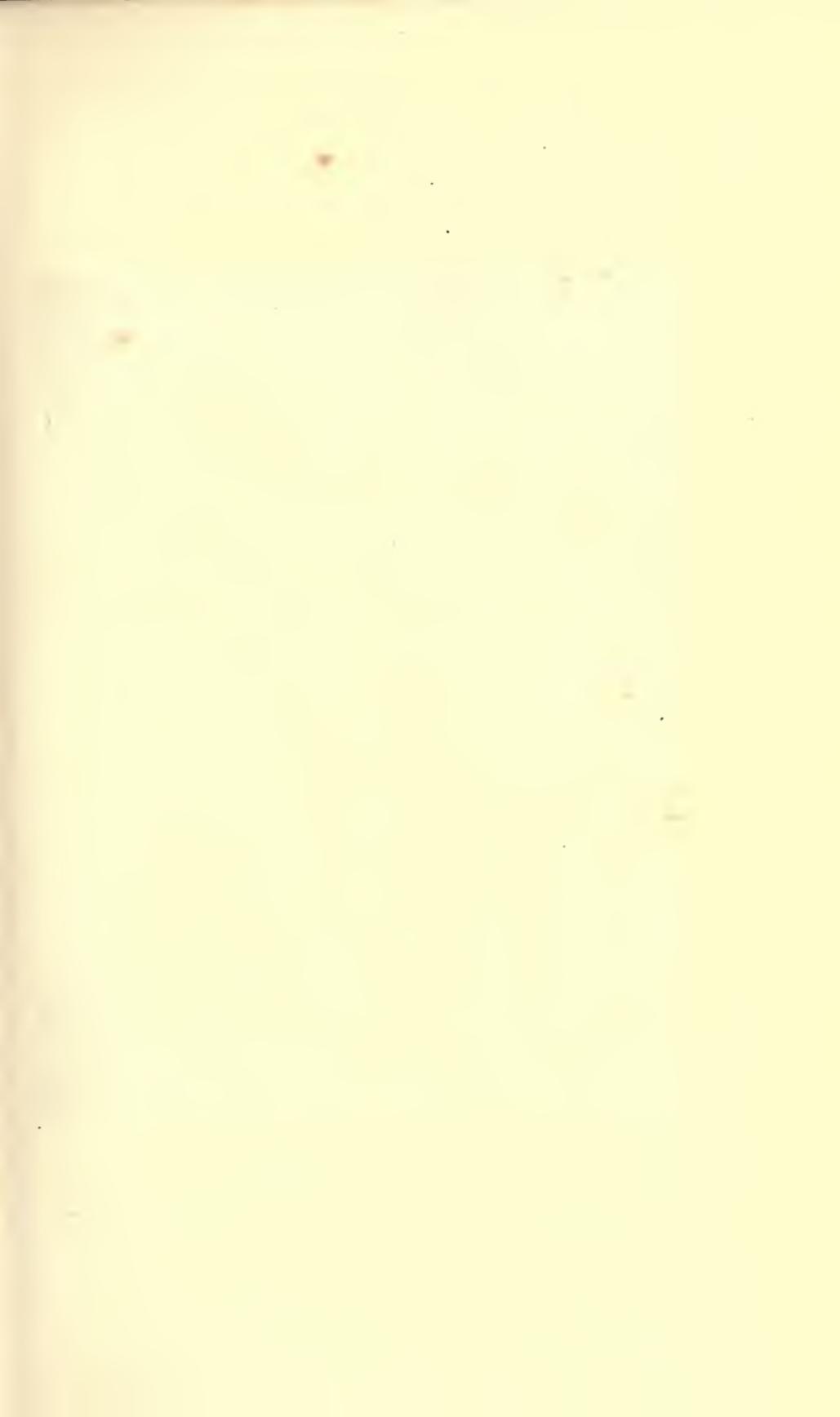
path of an avalanche, where the great fir-trees were snapped off like reeds, and huge boulders lay scattered to the water's edge.

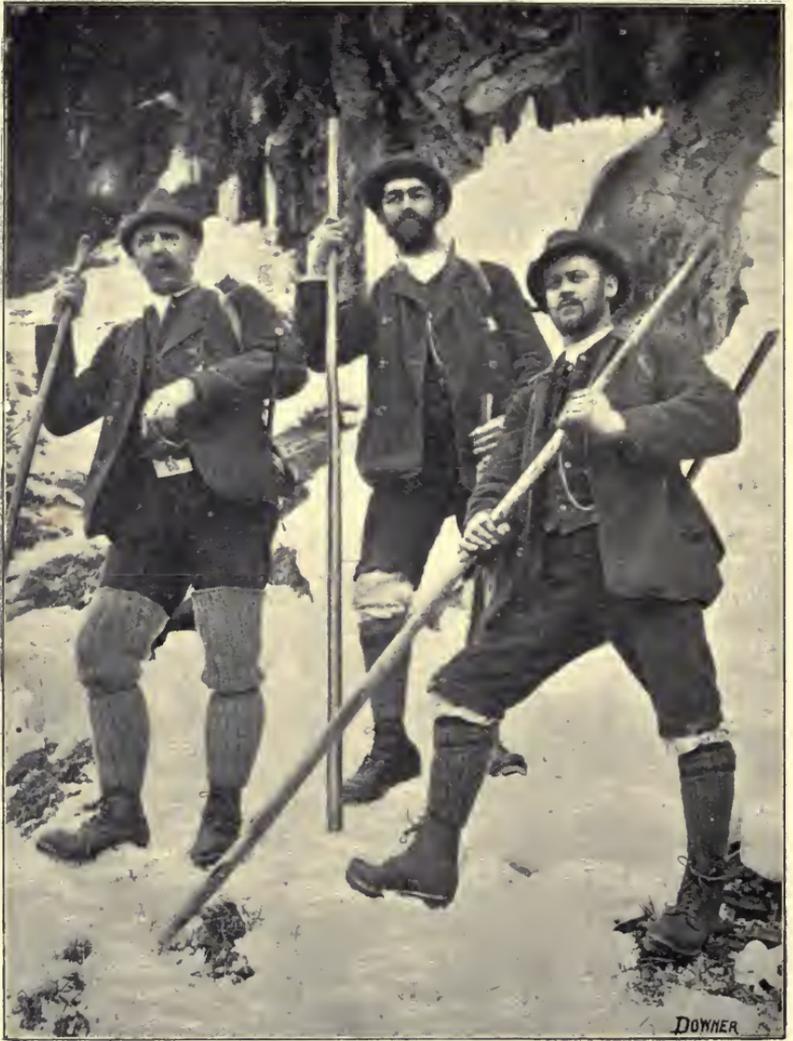
The mist had cleared off by this time, and the mountains rose up on each side of us in all their grandeur ; whilst the warm rays of the afternoon sun lit up their weather-beaten sides, and cast those wonderful purple shadows over the grey rock.

There is a strange charm in mountain scenery—a feeling of awe that steals over one as one looks at these mighty products of nature, so solemn, so still, so massive, in their silent majesty !

I have heard people say that a mountain is a mountain, and that each one is like every other. To me it is not so. Each mountain has its own distinctive features, its own *character*, if one may say so. One can almost fancy that they are not inanimate things—these great peaks—but living feeling monsters, unchangeable and immovable in their sublimity !

“ Hansel ” had but one fault—a mania for walking along the edges of precipices. He also resented my interfering with his course ; and, when I did so, had a disagreeable way of standing on three legs on the brink of a perpendicular descent, with one hind leg dangling over the edge. It was not quite pleasant, but I gave up trying to guide him in the end, and let him follow his own sweet will.





THE THREE KEEPERS.

TO THE MOUNTAINS

I believe that pony had a sense of humour, and was playing practical jokes on me!

It was five o'clock and the light was fading when we reached "home." A little two-storied wooden hut, standing on a grassy meadow at the head of the Zillergrund, as the valley up which we had come is called; a sitting-room fifteen feet square, a small kitchen, and three smaller bedrooms—such were our quarters. Three or four more log-huts stood near it—deserted for the winter, however, for the peasants had long before driven their cattle down to the main valley. On either hand of the hut a fresh valley opened out; behind it rose a solid wall of mountain; whilst fifty yards below our little habitation flowed the river.

"The Baron" and I shared the same room. It was small—very—the two beds took up most of it; but we both were just able to dress in the remaining space at the same time! It would not have done to have talked secrets in that hut—one could hear every word spoken, in whatever room, all over the house!

Six o'clock dinner and a smoke afterwards, and then the keepers came in to discuss the plans for the morrow's drive.

There were three of them—two, giants of over six feet high, handsome stalwart men, and truly picturesque in their grey frieze jackets, short leather

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

breeches, and heavy iron-shod boots. The third keeper was smaller, and there was a merry twinkle in his bright eye that made it impossible to look into his jolly face without smiling.

In summer the men leave their knees bare ; but in winter, though they still have the short breeches, they wear warm under-garments that cover the knee.

The cold is intense in the winter, and the dwellers in huts high up the mountains are frequently snowed up for months together. Even should a death occur, it is impossible to take the corpse down to the valley for burial till the spring. There is a somewhat gruesome story told in this connection, which has too its comic side.

In a lonely hut far up the mountain side there once lived a father with his sons. At the beginning of a severe winter the old man died. When the warmer weather came, the sons carried the frozen corpse down to the valley.

“ But,” said the priest, “ what are all these holes in your father ? ”

“ Well ! you see poor old father died,” replied one of the sons, “ and we put him up in the roof and he got frozen. So we used to take him out on moonlight nights as a bait, and shoot foxes ! ”

The poor old man was riddled with small shot !

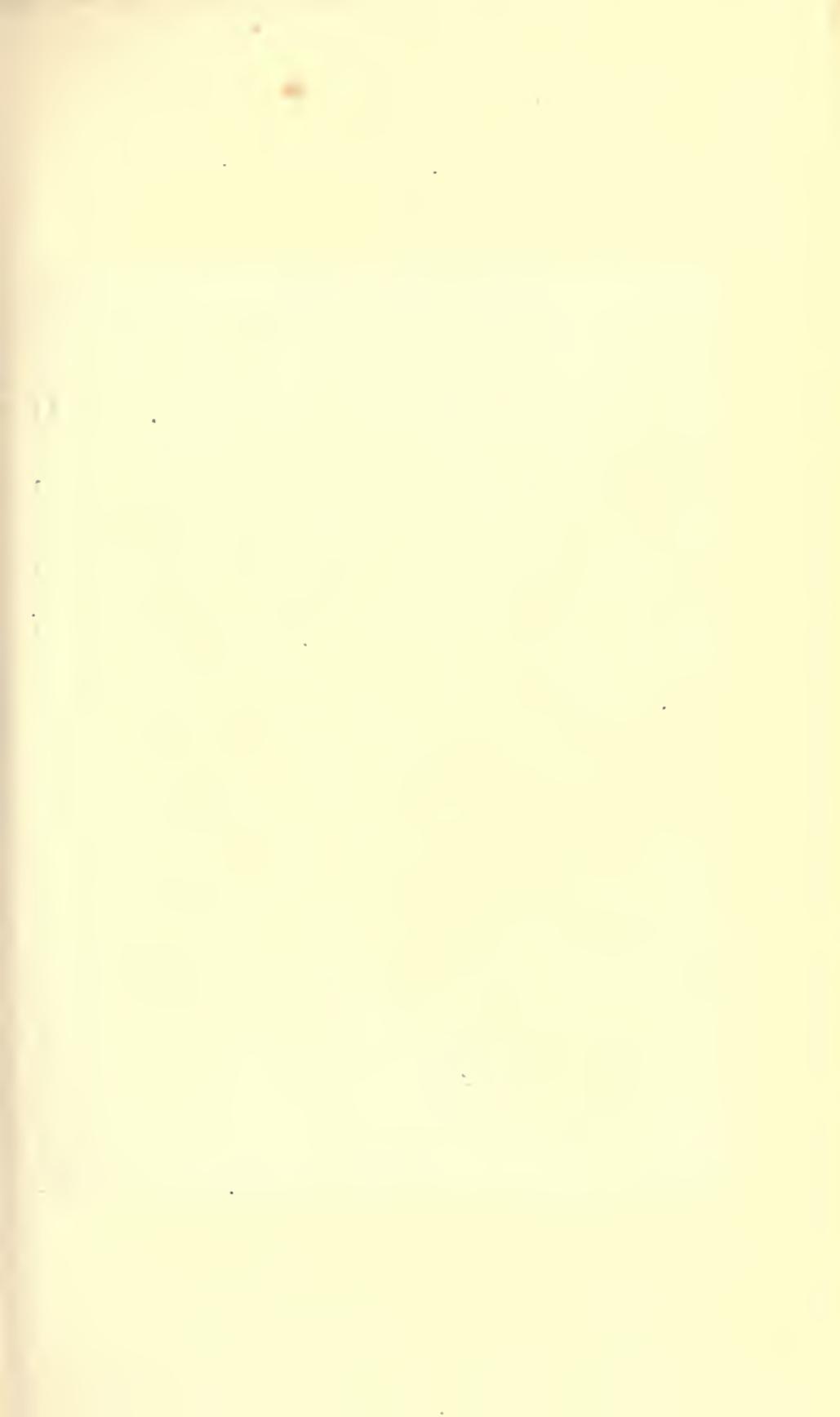
“ Breakfast at half-past six to-morrow,” said our

TO THE MOUNTAINS

host, as we went early to bed ; for “early to bed and early to rise” is the motto in the mountains.

And when I fell asleep, with the gentle murmur of the river in my ears, I dreamt that I had wounded a white chamois with golden horns—the *Zlatorog* of the Carinthian mountains, which to kill is eternal happiness, but to miss is death !

XI
MY FIRST CHAMOIS





THE ZILLERGRUND.

My First Chamois

SUNRISE is always a glorious sight, whether by land or sea ; but perhaps it is surpassingly beautiful in a mountainous country.

The stars paling in the first glimmer of light. The dim outlines of the mountains looming dark through the morning mists, and becoming each moment clearer and more defined as the dawn breaks. The eastern sky growing lighter and brighter—changing from grey to white—from white to saffron. And then the rosy blush that spreads upwards and outwards—from sky to mountain-top—until the golden rays of the sun, striking the summits of the highest peaks, flash back—reflected from every ice-field, from every glacier—in a million sparkling crystals of brilliant light !

Such was the spectacle that met our eyes on the morning that was to see my introduction to the chamois.

Half an hour's walk, along the same path up which

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

we had come the preceding afternoon, brought us to the point where we struck up the mountain side. Salchner, the tall dark handsome keeper, led, with his slow easy stride, never changing or altering—the regular pace of all the Tyrolese when going up-hill. It was quite fast enough for me, however ; there is nothing that tries the wind and condition more than mountain climbing !

Something over an hour brought us to the lowest “stand,” which was designated to me. It consisted of a pile of stones, covered with a layer of fir-branches, for a seat ; whilst the rock, against which they were placed, provided a rest for one’s back. The trunk of a fir-tree, with some stones and branches, partially screened one in front.

Here I settled myself comfortably with my *träger*—as the man who carries one’s *rucksack*, rifle, etc., is called—beside me. The *rucksack* is a bag, with two leather straps through which the arms are passed, and which will hold anything from a defunct chamois downwards. In this case it held a waist-coat, a woollen “sweater,” and my warm Tyrolese mantle—all of which I put on, for it is none too warm sitting on the breezy mountain side—and our lunch. A bit of *wurst* (or sausage) and a hunch of black bread, with some red wine, and a nip of something stronger afterwards to keep the cold out ; and then we compose ourselves for a long wait, for the



WECHSELBERGER.

MY FIRST CHAMOIS

highest post is an hour's hard climbing from where we sit.

Behind, and on our right, rises a perpendicular wall of rock ; and a deep cleft in the mountain side yawns beneath us. We look across this chasm, however, on to a steep stony slope, covered for the most part with fir-trees, and down this the chamois are expected to come. A tiny streamlet trickles down the rocks, and from far beneath in the distant valley comes the sound of the river. It is one of the most striking features of the Zillertal that, wherever one is, there is always the murmur of water to be heard.

An hour slowly passes. The cartridges have long been in my rifle, and I have consulted Wechselberger, my *träger*, as to the range of various striking landmarks. There is nothing more difficult to a stranger to the mountains than the correct judgment of distances. In the rarefied air everything appears so much nearer than it really is.

A black squirrel plays about on the stony slope before us. How one envies the little fellow his powers of climbing! It is strange, but here in the mountains black squirrels are more common than the red ones.

An Alpine crow, or chough, as we call it in England, flies away from the cliff above our heads, with a harsh cry of defiance—half croak, half caw ; and a

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

little winter moth is hovering aimlessly among the branches of a fir-tree—they and the squirrel are the only signs of life.

What's that? Thunder? Surely not—in November—not a cloud in the sky ; a thunder-storm—too absurd! But there it is again! “The signal shots,” whispers Wechselberger.

Yes, there is another shot, faint and indistinct ; and then comes a roll as of cannon, as the report is echoed and re-echoed from every mountain chain.

The drive has begun !

For an hour and a half we sit absolutely motionless, only our eyes moving as we eagerly scan in every direction our somewhat limited range of vision.

The shots from the beaters grow nearer and nearer, and the icy wind chills one through and through, but still nothing comes. I steal a glance at Wechselberger ; there is a decidedly depressed look on his face—evidently he thinks there is small chance of anything coming now, and my spirits sink to zero !

A hissing sound uttered by Wechselberger interrupts my dismal forebodings. I follow the direction of his glance, and there behold, far below us, a brownish-blackish animal with a white face, picking its way up the steep slope, and stopping to gaze around every few yards! The white face is its most striking feature.



Photo by OTTOMAR ANSCHÜTZ.]
"A BROWNISH-BLACKISH ANIMAL WITH A WHITE FACE."
[Bertin, H. Urüber Lissa.]

MY FIRST CHAMOIS

“*Buck!*” whispers Wechselberger.

So this is a chamois! It is the first I have ever seen, except in picture-books!

“Shoot the next time he stands,” is the command of my faithful *träger*.

Curiously enough I feel perfectly cool and quiet! My rifle is already cocked, and I bring it slowly up to my shoulder, rest my elbows on my knees, so as to secure a perfectly steady shot, and wait.

He has stopped, but behind a tree, and it is impossible to fire.

Now he is moving on.

There! He has stopped again, and in an open place. He is close to one of my landmarks, so I know the distance to be about 120 yards, and he presents me his full broadside.

“Crack” goes my little .360 express, and through the smoke I see the chamois flinch to the shot. Evidently he is hit far back, for he draws himself together with his back arched and then goes slowly forward with feeble tottering steps. He turns and stands, and I fire a second time at his chest as he faces me. This time I have a vision of four legs in the air, and the truth dawns upon me that I have killed my first chamois!

But there is little time for self-congratulation, for a big black bounding object comes down the slope with the speed of a cannon-ball.

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

“*Schiess! Schiess!*” exclaims Wechselberger.

It is very easy to say, but not so easy to do, for the chamois is hidden every second by a tree or a stone. I do “*schiess, schiess,*” however, but in vain, and the beast disappears unharmed in the wood below.

Another ten minutes' wait; and then it seems to me that straight in front of us, amongst the trees, is some dark object that was not there two seconds before. It is perfectly immovable, and so are we. Minutes, that seem like hours, slowly pass; but at length—when I have almost made up my mind that I must be gazing at some hitherto unnoticed root or stone—it moves out on to a crag that rises above the surrounding fir-trees. There it stands—a black silhouette against the blue sky!

The next moment my shot rings out, and the chamois, springing high into the air, and turning over and over, falls down . . . down . . . into the abyss beneath.

I have one more shot—at a chamois that sneaks upwards through the trees, and which goes its way seemingly untouched, though Wechselberger affirms that it is hit.

In chamois driving everything that comes is, as a rule, legitimate game—*Kitz-geisen* and kids alone excepted. The big old bucks are, however, what one always looks and longs for. An old buck is



"I REST MY ELBOWS ON MY KNEES, SO AS TO SECURE A
PERFECTLY STEADY SHOT."

MY FIRST CHAMOIS

generally almost, if not quite, black in November ; and as their winter coat is much longer and thicker than their dun-coloured summer one, they look particularly thick-set and sturdy.

The trophies of a chamois are, of course, the horns, or *Kriicklen*, and the *Gems-Bart*, or beard. To the uninitiated it may be as well to explain that this "beard" grows, not on the chin, but along the back! In other words, the long white-tipped hairs that grow along the spinal column are carefully plucked out, and made up into a tuft, which is worn in the hat by Continental sportsmen, and is called the *Gems-Bart*. The older the buck, as a rule, the longer the "beard" ; and the longer the "beard," and the whiter the tips of the hairs that compose it, the more is it prized by its owner. It is a curious but well-established fact that the horns of chamois shot on the limestone ranges of the Alps are better than those shot on the granite formation. Exactly the converse holds good with regard to the beards.

My first chamois was a three-year-old, with good horns for his age, but a poor "beard." The second one I never saw. Neither a shot through the lungs, nor the fall, had killed him ; and he had dragged himself along to an absolutely unapproachable place—doubtless to die!

The third was but slightly wounded (if he was hit!), and was probably little the worse.

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

It was not quite agreeable getting back from my "stand" to a sort of sheep-path by which we had ascended the mountain. In one place but some two yards of steep grass-slope separated us from a sheer drop of hundreds of feet, and the thought of what would happen if one *did* slip was not pleasant! It is an old truth in climbing that wherever one can get down (provided one does not jump or drop) one can get up—I had hardly noticed this place in ascending!

More than one drive is seldom taken in a day, so when the other guns came down we made for home.

The Prince and young Hochleitner had each shot a doe. "The Sun" had wounded and lost a good buck. The other Imperial keeper had missed a beast, and the Baron had seen nothing within shot.

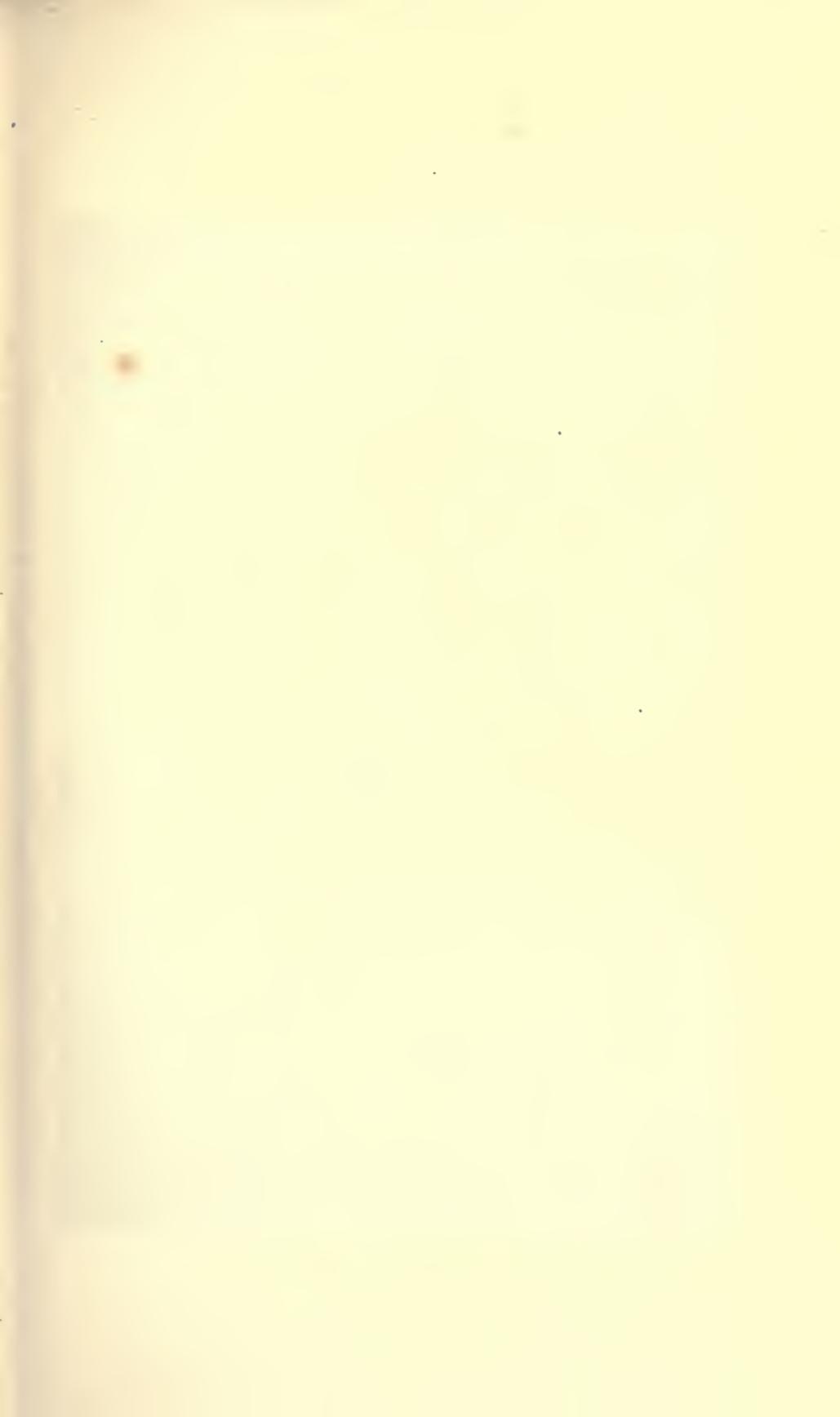
Poor old "Sun"! He was very gloomy about his buck, and the drive generally.

"Only three chamois in the day! We ought to have got more," he kept saying.

But I do not think there was a happier individual in all the Austrian Empire that evening than I!

XII

ON THE EDGE OF THE SNOW





OUR HUT, WITH THE RACH-KAAR IN THE DISTANCE.

On the Edge of the Snow

THERE is an old proverb to the effect that "a bad beginning makes a good ending." So it was with the weather on Wednesday, November 11th, the day on which we had determined to drive the *Rach-Kaar*, as one of the highest mountains of the Zillergrund is called.

We rose at half-past five, breakfasted by candle-light, and then only to find that the mountains were covered with thick mist.

Mist is the most dreaded foe of the chamois-hunter. You may have the best place in the best drive; and the chamois may do their duty and all come obligingly forward; and there you can sit, listening to the stones falling from beneath their feet—as they pass, perhaps, within a few yards of you—and not see so much as a shadowy phantom of one, through the dense curtain of vapour that enfolds you in its damp and chilly embrace!

However, we set off, following the course of the river, which comes roaring and clattering down a

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

narrow gorge, to form a bend below the hut, and flow on down the main valley—the Zillergrund.

There is great beauty in these mountain streams. The rocks and boulders that lie scattered along their course, encrusted with red or grey or yellow lichen ; the little pools among the rocks, blue as the sea and clear as crystal ; the miniature cascades and waterfalls where the rushing torrent bubbles and foams in its haste ; and the pure cold water itself, fresh from its snowy source, hurrying onward—ever onward !

There had been a hard frost in the night, and the ground was like iron, whilst the ice-coated stones made climbing slippery and sometimes difficult work. The colour of the fir-trees was changed to pearly white by hoar-frost, which sparkled and glittered in the rays of the morning sun, that now began to struggle through the mist.

Two hours' climbing brought us above the tree line, where the only vegetation besides the rough coarse grass is a small species of rhododendron, that in the spring brightens these high altitudes with its deep red flowers, and the *Latchen*, or dwarf pine, loved by the chamois both for shelter and food.

Another hour, and we came out on to the upper slopes, where all vegetation ceases, and a view, such as I have never before seen, lay before us.

The valley we had left behind was filled with

ON THE EDGE OF THE SNOW

mist, like a sea of white fleecy cloud or swan's-down. All round, the mountain-tops rose pure and white, against a sky of such a deep, dark blue that only the Alps can show; whilst the glorious sunshine poured down on the dazzling whiteness, and cast those blue shadows on the snow that only they who have seen can realize.

It was a sight that made one catch one's breath at its very loveliness!

My post was on the extreme left of the line of guns, and the whole drive was visible from it. Before me lay the *Rach-Kaar*, a steep knife-back ridge, down whose snow-clad side the beaters would come. On my left the mountain descended almost perpendicularly to the valley. About a hundred yards on my right a stream flowed along a shallow ravine—a favourite line of retreat of the chamois, Wechselberger told me.

A frugal lunch, and a pipe, and then followed the usual long wait. The sun shone down upon us with summer-like warmth, whilst we basked in its rays, and watched the Prince and his *träger*, like ants on the mountain side, climbing to his stand. A dread of an insufficiency of exercise, and a laudable desire to tire himself out—which, however, I never knew him able to accomplish—led him always to prefer the highest post! Two or three little bands of chamois, too, were visible with their

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kids. Some ptarmigan, white as the mountain tops they haunt, were flying around us.

The drive was to begin at noon, and at twelve o'clock to the second the signal shot echoed and re-echoed along the mountains. It was interesting to watch its effect on the chamois that were in sight. Instantly they seemed to recognise their danger. A second or two of indecision, and then the leader (always an old doe) seemed to have made up her mind and chosen the line of flight. In the first instance this was always backwards towards the higher ground and the beaters, as if they knew that the real peril lay in front.

But more chamois are to be seen coming over the steep ridge—little black dots on the white snow. Through the glasses I have been watching one on the sky line, standing in its characteristic position, with its head and neck just over the edge, immovable, gazing intently downwards; when Wechselberger draws my attention, by the usual serpent-like hiss, to something nearer at hand.

A chamois is standing within a hundred and twenty yards of us!

“Shoot?” I whisper, for I am but a beginner, and make no pretensions to be able to spot the right animal.

My keen-eyed *träger* replies in the affirmative, so I slowly bring up my rifle, and fire.

ON THE EDGE OF THE SNOW

The sun is drawing near the edge of the *Rach-Kaar*, and I was shooting right into it, so I feel somewhat doubtful about the success of the shot. I fancy I saw the chamois give a sort of flounder though, as he disappeared over the big rock on which he was standing. In any case I have not seen him go away.

A chamois-drive, enjoyable at any time, is still more so when one has a wide view of mountain. There are then almost always chamois in sight, and the interest is sustained and one's attention kept continually at the highest stretch.

It is bitterly cold now, for the sun has sunk behind the great mountain, and we are in the shade. One or two beaters are already visible on the top of the ridge, standing out black against the brightness of the sky. There has been firing from the right, but we are too far away to see the result of the shots. It is the most difficult thing in the world, too, owing to the deceptive echo, to locate the report of a rifle, and to be sure whether the firing comes from the other guns, or from the beaters.

Suddenly two chamois, that have been for a long time hesitating by which route to escape, evidently determine to break through on the flank. From their direction we know, that if nothing changes it, they will pass at one point within a hundred and

ON PLAIN AND PEAK

fifty yards of us. This is almost the most exciting feature of a chamois-drive—the doubt as to whether the chamois that one sees approaching will or will not come within range.

The two we are watching are continually hidden by the conformation of the ground, and it is with breathless anxiety that we each time await their reappearance. Now they are out of sight again; when they next come into view they will be within shot, if nothing turns them. The suspense is dreadful. Did ever a chamois take so long to traverse a couple of hundred yards of ground? They *must* have turned up the hill again!

No! The leading one suddenly springs out upon a rock, almost the same place where the other chamois stood, but a little farther off.

Wechselberger says "Shoot!" and I do so. Again the chamois has disappeared, and I know not whether hit or missed. My trusty *träger* is not sure either; he *thinks* it may be hit, he says. There is nothing for it but to possess one's soul in patience; at the end of the drive we shall know!

The beaters are now descending the almost perpendicular ridge before us. In the distance it looks well-nigh impossible for any human being to obtain a foothold there; but they come skipping down, with almost as much unconcern as if they were on



Photo by OTTOMAR ANSCHÜTZ.]

[Berlin, W. (früher Lissa).

“END ON, AND TURNED AWAY.”

ON THE EDGE OF THE SNOW

the level ground. There is no other word but *skipping* that will describe the Tyrolese method of going down hill. The *bergstock* (or staff) is placed well in front, and the mountaineer descends with a series of little skipping jumps, throwing all his weight upon his trusty "stock," but allowing his hands to slide down it. The *bergstock*, the iron point of which never slips if properly placed, brings him up, after each series of jumps.

What is this beast that is stealing along by the water-course? It looks very big and very black, and comes forward very stealthily, stopping to gaze for minutes together every few yards.

"*Ein capitaler Bock!*" whispers Wechselberger.

He has crossed the stream, and is trotting along the opposite bank. If only he would stop! And here let me remark, in parentheses, that one shot at a standing object is worth six at a moving one; and that a chamois will generally stand to look about him if one only has the patience to wait.

He has done so! It is only for a second, though; for as I press the trigger he moves forward.

There is no doubt about his being hit, however. He comes staggering down the bank, but then pulls himself together, and makes off.

Twice more I fire, but they must both be misses, for he never falters.

Am I going to lose him, after all?

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I reload the right barrel, and fling myself flat on the rock. Visions of long-range shooting at the rifle butts, and the welcome white disc that marked the "bull," flit before me.

He has stopped again! Now is my opportunity; my last chance too, for in another yard or two he will be over a ridge and out of sight. It is well over two hundred yards, and he is end on, and turned away. I set the hair-trigger, draw a long breath, take the most careful aim I can, and fire.

I see him roll over, but as he goes struggling over the edge he seems to be on his legs again.

Wechselberger runs over the rocks to higher ground. "He's down!" he shouts.

Those words are sweeter at that moment than the sweetest music!

The beaters are now within a couple of hundred yards of us, so we go to look after the other two chamois. We find them both stone dead, within a few yards of the places where they were shot!

It was a long way back to the hut, and almost all steep downhill work, which is even more tiring than going up, and infinitely more dangerous. But to me it seemed as nothing, for were there not three beaters before me each with a chamois of mine on his back?

Six chamois formed the *strecke* that evening, the *strecke* being the day's bag all placed neatly on the



"STEEP DOWN-HILL WORK."

ON THE EDGE OF THE SNOW

ground in rows — an universal Austrian custom. “The Sun” had shot a doe ; and the two keepers had each shot a buck, one rather a good one.

But over my big buck “the Sun” grew eloquent.

“My dear fellow,” he said, “if you shoot here for twenty years, you will never shoot a better one! Look at his horns! Look at his head! Look at the whole beast! He is one of the very best bucks in the whole Zillerthal!”

And, personally, I had not the slightest wish to contradict him.

XIII
BAD LUCK

XIII

Bad Luck

“This way the chamois leapt : her nimble feet
Have baffled me ; my gains to-day will scarce
Repay my break-neck travail.”

—*Byron.*

ONE often hears it said that a writer on Sport only speaks of successful days ; in fact, never seems to fall into the same misfortunes as ordinary folk, and by no chance ever misses !

Whilst admitting, to some extent, the truth of these charges, it may be urged in extenuation that success is always more pleasant to look back upon than disappointment.

We have all failures enough—in any and every walk in life ; with some of us, life itself is a failure !

We do not care to speak of the failures, though. Rather let us hide them, bury them, forget them—if we can ! Memory is a good friend to us in this. It is the pleasant remembrances that remain the freshest and last the longest—the disagreeable ones that are the soonest blurred over by the lapse of time.

It is not my intention to skip the bad days, how-

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ever. To do so would give quite a wrong impression of chamois-driving.

It is not always sunshine, even in the Alps ; and the weather has a great part to play. To say nothing of the terrors of mist, there is the wind to be taken into account. The best managed drive in the world may be spoilt at the last moment by the wind chopping round, for nothing on earth will make chamois face a danger-tainted breeze. Accidents will occur, too : a poacher may have passed through the drive, and hopelessly disturbed the game ; or a beater may mistake an order, and arrive at an appointed place too soon—such things often utterly ruin what might otherwise have been a most successful day.

We had more than our share of bad luck during our week in the Tyrol. Out of seven days' driving, one was spoilt by the wind, one by a shot fired by a poacher before the drive commenced, and three days were not as good as they should have been, but for no apparent reason.

Friday, the thirteenth of November (could one find a more unlucky date ?), broke bright and frosty. It was a lovely morning. The sun shone down upon the whitened ground, and every grass-stem sparkled in his golden rays as if studded with a score of diamonds. On such a day mere existence was a pleasure !

BAD LUCK

There was no hurry either that morning. The beaters, indeed, had an early start and a long round to make; but our posts were quite close to the hut—the farthest, not more than three-quarters of an hour's walk from it. We had plenty of time, therefore, to read our letters and papers, that were brought each day as regularly as if we were in the height of civilization. The newspapers were pretty old, certainly—my *Standard* dated six days back—but what matter? They were fresh to us.

A woman used to act as our postman. Each morning at four o'clock she left Mäyrhofen, with her letter-bag and a little lantern; and each morning at eight (almost to the second) she reached the hut. An hour's rest, and then she set out on her return journey, with one or two defunct chamois on her strong shoulders. A wonderful sturdy race—men and women alike—are these mountain people!

It was eleven o'clock before there was any occasion for me to start for my post, and even then we had some time to wait for the signal shot. Wechselberger filled up the interval by telling me in whispers of the famous bucks that he had seen shot from our stand. It was a very curious one—a piece of rock had partially detached itself from the parent cliff, and, by so doing, formed a sort of natural pulpit, in which we sat.

The signal shot reduced us to silence and im-

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movability, and myself to building castles in the air. It must have been the fineness of the day, combined with the stories of my trusty *träger*, that made me feel so particularly hopeful that morning. A thick pine-wood clothed the steep slope of the hill on our left, and it was from its shelter that the record buck I was dreaming of would, I felt sure, come. I had even determined in my own mind the exact place where he would stand, and I disposed my rifle so that I could bring it up quickly and easily to my shoulder when he made his appearance. Thus I waited.

Below, in the valley, I could see fat Anton, the Prince's servant, pacing backwards and forwards, alpine-stock in hand, and stopping from time to time to gaze through a pair of glasses towards where we sat. He had never seen a living chamois, and was waiting too—to see one.

But it was all in vain! The minutes dragged along, and as every quarter of an hour passed a little of my hopefulness ebbed away. The shots from the beaters grew nearer and nearer. Our position, cramped from the first, grew more and more uncomfortable, and even Wechselberger began to fidget. To the very end I hoped, however. Might not some old buck, which had seen the game before, lie close in the fir-wood till the very last minute?

BAD LUCK

No such luck! The appearance of a beater at the edge of the wood, and that of the other "guns" in the far distance, followed by more beaters carrying what were evidently chamois, told us that the drive was over, and our last hope fled. We had waited indeed; but for what never came!

The Prince had had the luck that day, and killed three chamois.

But it is not often (in a good preserve, at least) that one *sees* absolutely nothing. Unless the wind plays some trick, one almost always has a sight of game—though perhaps too far to shoot at—and generally one may count on getting a shot. On the occasion I was speaking of, however, the wind was excellent, and there were plenty of chamois in the drive. It was sheer bad luck! Perhaps that fatal date caused it!

The weather had, on the whole, smiled on us during our stay in the Zillergrund, but on the last day we saw the other side of the picture. The wind blew fitfully and gustily and, seemingly, from every point of the compass. Blinding snow-showers came on continually, the white feathery flakes drifting round us as we sat shivering in the biting wind, that blew through and through one.

My post was, of course, the most exposed I had had during the whole time we were in the Tyrol—luck

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again! I sat on a point of rock that rose up in a lonely sort of way from a steep stone-clad descent—a perfect playground of avalanches—whilst the hailstones spattered on my face, and the cold numbed my fingers till I could hardly feel the rifle. It was the sort of day that makes one doubt, perhaps just for one second, if in such weather chamois-shooting is enjoyable!

Wechselberger was utterly despondent from the first; we should see nothing, he said; the wind was too bad for words. I was, as usual, hopeful. Something might come forward, get the wind of the other guns, break away on the flank, and, as I was on the extreme right, give me a chance. So I sat and hoped, and restored some feeling to my trigger-finger by keeping my hand inside my shirt.

The luck was dead against us, however, as well as the wind!

For hours we sat in a semi-frozen state and waited, and then, two hundred yards below us, two chamois appeared round a corner of rock. In any case, foreshortened as they were owing to our being far above them, it would have been a doubtful sort of shot and the fact that some stunted bushes grew between us and them, so that my bullet would have had to find its way through the straggling branches, made it quite useless to fire. I tried standing up, but still they were safely “wood-bound,” and to

BAD LUCK

move my position on the precipitous crag was impossible. The only thing was to hope for a clear shot when they continued their course.

They passed on, the cliff, on which we were perched, hiding them from view. It was some time before they reappeared, and, when they did so, they were on the top of a ridge fully four hundred yards away. A few seconds would take them out of sight for good ; so when the last one stopped for a moment on the summit of the ridge, I fired.

It was a forlorn hope ! The chamois neither flinched nor fell, and disappeared evidently untouched.

And then the climax to our bad luck occurred !

I was in the act of slipping a fresh cartridge into the right barrel when some inner feeling warned me to turn my head to the left. There, on a shoulder of mountain not a hundred yards off, standing out big and black through the falling snow, the long hairs on his back waving in the wind, was a magnificent buck chamois !

To ram the cartridge home, close and cock the rifle, and bring it to my shoulder, was the work of no time. But too late ! With a whistle of alarm, the old fellow had wheeled round and dashed back out of our sight for ever !

Bad luck indeed ! If I had only not fired that long and useless shot at the other two, I should have

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had a loaded rifle and a steady "pot" at the biggest old buck "whatever was seen"—for the proportions of the animals we do *not* get always exceed the others!

These sentiments I sadly laid before the faithful Wechselberger. But as he philosophically said: "That is all very well, *mein Herr*, but we could not know that the other chamois would come, and, *with luck*, you might have got one of the first two."

* * * * *

There is luck in most things besides chamois-shooting.

To the fortunate few, success comes quickly; to the great majority, only after years of working and waiting—if it comes at all!

"Everything comes to him who waits," says the proverb. Possibly, but it often comes *too late*—so late, that one has almost ceased to care for what one once so eagerly sought. When one has grown tired of the longing and striving, when the power of enjoyment of the heart's desire has well-nigh gone—then it comes!

XIV

THE VALLEY OF ETERNAL SLEEP

XIV

The Valley of Eternal Sleep

"There was no motion in the dumb dead air."

—*Tennyson.*

IT lies far away among the mountains—that lonely valley.

A patch of wood hides the entrance to it—a dim, dark fir wood, where huge moss-covered boulders lie piled one upon another between the great trees. Grey trailing lichen, like an old man's beard, hangs from the branches—lichen that spreads gradually upwards, until the whole tree is enveloped in its soft clinging grasp. In its grasp, but dead; for where it clings it kills!

No birds are in that wood, no living creature; only silence lurks there.

And from the silent wood we entered the silent valley.

It was the afternoon of a fine, clear day; the ground was hard and white with frost, and the Zillergrund behind us was bathed in the glow of the setting sun.

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But there, in the lonely valley, no sunshine came.

High, dark mountains rose on every side ; walls of frowning crag, with hardly a fir-tree to break the barrenness of the bare grey granite. Stones and boulders, carried down by avalanches from the heights above, lay scattered everywhere around us. A rivulet flowed through the valley, but without sound. The very air hung dumb and motionless ; not a breath of wind disturbed the stillness.

There is a mighty power in silence—a power to lift the human mind from the vanities and emptiness of life to something higher.

The hush of the twilight, the calm beauty of a summer night, the stillness of a snow-clad landscape—what is it in them that stirs those better feelings that lie hidden in every one ? Not the mere beauty of the fading light, of the starry sky, of the dazzling whiteness, but the vast speechless voice of silence that speaks in them all, and raises our thoughts to something loftier and nobler.

There are other places of worship besides the churches and cathedrals of men. Go out into the forests and mountains, by the river or sea-shore. God still walks there, and speaks face to face with man.

We wandered along the lonely valley to where a great mountain shuts it in. The twilight lay



"THE VALLEY OF ETERNAL SLEEP."

H. H. H. H.

THE VALLEY OF ETERNAL SLEEP

around us, intensifying the gloom and desolation ; only on the summit of that lofty peak a ray from the setting sun lingered and changed its snowy mantle into pink. We stood and watched the shadow creep up and up the snow, as the sun sank, creeping upwards, slowly but surely, until at last the sunlight had gone, and the whole was shadow.

It was like the last ray of hope slipping out of one's life—that sunbeam on the mountain top, slipping gradually away, and leaving only the grey, hard barrenness, the stern reality of life!

We turned and walked homeward through the gloaming.

“The moon is up, and yet it is not night.”

The western sky was still golden, though the stars twinkled in the pale blue vault overhead. Over mountain and valley alike lay the calm of the evening hour, when day and night merge into one.

And as we came in sight of our little hut, with its lighted windows gleaming bright and ruddy through the gloom, we looked back and saw the mountain, that had been so grey and cheerless, once more flooded with rosy light, blushing in the last faint pink of the after-glow, against the starry sky.

And so we left the lonely valley.

“It may be desolate and deserted now,” said the

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Prince, "but how will it be when everything is covered with snow? It must look like Eternal Sleep!"

And thus we named it—"The Valley of Eternal Sleep."

XV

TYROL AND THE TYROLESE .

Tyrol and the Tyrolese

“Sind die Tyroler, ein Volk von Shutzen, nicht das treuste aller Volker?”

—*W. V. Burgsdorff.*

FROM the year 1363, when Margaretha Maultasche (Pocket-mouthed Meg), the last successor of the Counts of Tyrol, granted Tyrol to Duke Rudolph IV. of Austria, the country has always remained devoted to Austria and the House of Hapsburg.

Mutterings of discontent might rise from other parts of the Empire, Bohemia might struggle in vain for freedom, and the standard of rebellion float on the plains of Hungary, but the Tyrolese were always loyal, always faithful to their Sovereign.

“We have no traitors in my country,” the great national hero, Andreas Hofer, once said.

It was on the eve of the rising of 1809 against the French that he thus replied to those who blamed his childlike trust in all who came to him.

And Hofer knew his countrymen. It was not

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till when, at the head of 4,500 men, he had attacked and routed the Bavarians,—not till when, with his peasant army, he had carried Innsbruck by storm,—that the secret of the conspiracy leaked out.

There is nothing that shows the devotion of the Tyrolese to their Emperor more than the story of that insurrection. Austria, utterly routed at the battle of Austerlitz, lay at the feet of Napoleon, and Tyrol had been handed over by him to Bavaria, the vassal of France.

But the spirit of the mountaineers was unconquered. For three years indeed they had groaned under the Bavarian yoke. But during that time the Austrian Emperor had never ceased encouraging the idea of a rising; and Andreas Hofer, a plain, honest, God-fearing peasant, the landlord of a village inn, had been summoned to Vienna to consult with the Government on the best means of carrying it out. The Emperor's own brother had told the peasant leader that Austria would never lay down her arms until Tyrol was once more freed from the hated Bavarian rule; and the "good" Kaiser Franz himself had assured his faithful Tyrolese that he would never be a party to a peace that did not restore their country as a part of the Austrian Empire. Little wonder that the simple peasants trusted such promises!

Hofer had two trusty lieutenants in Haspinger,



A ZILLERTHALER GIRL.

TYROL AND THE TYROLESE

the Capuchin monk, and a chamois-hunter of the name of Speckbacher. With their help, he formed the hardy, sport-loving mountaineers into a rough army, eager and ready to fight to the death for their beloved country and Emperor.

On the evening of April 10th, 1809, vast beacon fires flared from the snow-clad peaks; and by the end of the month Tyrol was free.

At this moment the Kaiser gave the command of the troops to General Chasteler, and he quickly lost all that Hofer had won.

Still the peasants did not despair. Again Andreas Hofer gathered an army, and, for the second time, stormed Innsbruck, and cleared Tyrol of its enemies.

But, though the simple landlord of a country inn was victorious, the Austrian Field Marshals were not. Beaten on the banks of the blue Danube, in the battle of Wagram, the Emperor signed the armistice of Znaim, and in that convention Tyrol was ignored!

Hofer would not believe it; and, when he saw the Austrian troops retire from Innsbruck before Marshal Lefebvre and his 50,000 men, he swore that he would once more conquer—or die.

From a distant valley far up the mountains he sent forth his call to arms. Not only every able-bodied man who could carry a rifle obeyed the

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summons, but even old men, women, and children, who pushed down trunks of trees and rocks upon the foe. Once more Hofer and his chamois-hunters' swept the French before them ; and, for the third time, the peasant hero entered Innsbruck in triumph.

The scene on his entry beggars description. The people pressed around him to kiss his hand, his boots, his horse ; they hailed him as their deliverer ; they named him their dictator.

Yet Andreas Hofer never forgot that he was but the simple peasant landlord. Their thanks were due to God, and not to him ; it was God who had helped them, so he told the people. And with rare sagacity and wisdom he set himself to rule in Innsbruck—for his master, the Emperor.

Meanwhile that master had signed the Peace of Vienna, by which the Tyrol was given up to Napoleon's vengeance. French troops poured into the lovely valleys ; the Archduke John himself wrote to Hofer to bid him lay down his arms.

There is something tragically touching in the blind devotion of the patriot at this time. He could not believe that the Emperor—the dear “good” Kaiser Franz—would abandon him and his countrymen thus ! It was a mistake, a lie ! He would fight on.

But Hofer's day was done. The peasants had lost heavily in the former fighting ; they were de-

TYROL AND THE TYROLESE

feated in a desperate battle; and the next call to arms was in vain, for all who could do so had already come. Speckbacher had but thirteen followers left. Nothing remained but flight.

And this Andreas Hofer scorned. He would never leave his beloved Tyrol. He retired to a deserted hut high up the mountains, whilst for two months the French soldiers sought the "brigand," as they called him.

Then the traitor appeared — Donay the priest, Hofer's intimate friend. One morning he led a body of troops to the little hiding-place where the hero lay.

They brought Andreas Hofer down from the mountains, bound and a prisoner — past the inn where he had lived, through the village where he was born, through the snow-clad valleys — to Mantua.

The peasants, who had known and loved him from his boyhood, knelt as he passed, weeping, praying, beseeching him to bless them.

One day's pretence of a trial, and then came the order—he was to be shot within twenty-four hours.

It was a misty morning when they led him out. He refused to kneel, refused to have his eyes bandaged. His last piece of money he gave to the corporal. "Shoot straight!" he said. And then facing the platoon, he gave the order, "Fire!"

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Thus Andreas Hofer died.

And, whilst his most faithful subject was being done to death, the "good" Kaiser Franz was purchasing the patronage of the Corsican conqueror with the hand of his daughter!

The characteristics of the Tyrolese of to-day are the same as in Hofer's time. Devotion to his country, to his Emperor, to his God—such are the features of the simple mountaineer. He will never cringe, however. The Emperor himself he will address with the familiar *du*—the "thou" of equality and brotherhood. One's *träger* will raise his hat indeed, but then he will offer his hand.

Roman Catholicism is the religion of the Tyrol. The countless shrines that one meets with by every road and footpath, and the uncovered head with which every peasant passes them, testify to the religious feelings of the people.

And yet, as in most mountainous countries, immorality, according to our notions, is rife. Perhaps they are a superstitious, rather than a religious, people; but the common virtues of truth, honesty, and courage are nowhere found more generally than among them.

Romedius is one of the most popular Tyrolese saints. Riding one day into Taur, a village of the Inn valley, blessed with—what is by no means rare in the mountains—a healthy appetite, he did such

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justice to the food placed before him, that the feelings of a hungry bear were roused by the performance. For want of anything else, the bear ate up Romedius' horse. Whereupon the saint preached to him with such eloquence and power, that Bruin, filled with remorse and the desire to recompense the holy man for his loss, offered his own shaggy back as a means of conveyance. The friendship, thus begun, happily continued; and Romedius and the bear took up their abode in a cave, in the mountains north of Taur. But one day the saint, wishful to take a nap after dinner, was troubled by a fly, that insisted on settling on his nose. In vain St. Romedius struck repeatedly at his tormentor; the fly escaped each time, only to alight again upon the saintly organ of smell. The now thoroughly reformed bear, anxious to do his master a service, then approached, and aimed such a terrific blow at the small invader, that he struck, not only the fly, but St. Romedius himself, dead on the spot! The faithful animal, completely overcome by grief, then starved himself to death. So runs the legend; and thus the poor bear (and herein lies the most melancholy part of the story) died of hunger after all!

The Tyrolese are nothing if not musical. There is something in their music, too, that seems to fit in exactly with the wild beauty of the land. The sweet strains from the trembling strings of the

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zither, floating up on the evening air from some silent valley,—the mellow voices of the peasants, as they *jodel* some part-song, every note in perfect harmony, in the moonlight, blend with the murmur of the mountain streamlet, with the swirl and roar of the rushing torrent, with the gentle whispering of the pine-branches, in a strange accord.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Tyrolese is their innate love of sport. There has always been a tinge of romance, a kind of glamour, about the chamois-hunter. And the chamois-poacher, too, is a fine fellow. The man who will walk for eight or ten hours to the mountain he has selected for his stalking expedition, who will risk his life for the sake of an animal that, when killed, is probably not worth half a sovereign, is not the same sort of being as the lazy, drunken, good-for-nothing that we associate with the name of "poacher."

There is no doubt that it is the sheer love of sport that moves the Tyrolese poacher; and yet there is, occasionally, money to be made by his successes. The actual value of a dead chamois, without either horns or "beard," is only about four and a half *gulden* (7s. 6d.). But a good pair of buck's horns will sell for from ten to twenty *gulden*, and a fine *gemsbart* will fetch just as much; though such trophies as these do not fall to the lot of even a poacher any too often. Formerly, a regular war-

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fare was waged between keepers and poachers, and many a stalwart fellow has lost his life for the sake of the nimble mountain antelope. Nowadays, though here and there a man is shot, poaching is restrained, and carried on, in a less sanguinary manner ; and if it comes to a struggle, the rifles are generally laid aside, and the contending parties fight the matter out with their *bergstocks*.

The ibex, or *Steinbock*, to give it its German name, is now but a memory of the past, as far as the Tyrol is concerned. Two hundred years ago, however, the mountains that overlook Mäyrhofen sheltered almost as many ibex as chamois on their steep slopes. This district was then the property of the Archbishop of Salzburg. It was on account of the number of lives lost in the fights between keepers and poachers that led John Ernest, an Archbishop of a more peaceable but less sport-loving disposition than his predecessors, to give orders, in the early part of the eighteenth century, that the ibex were to be no longer preserved.

Most of our beaters were, I believe, guilty of an occasional little sporting expedition on their own account. Even Wechselberger, who, in his native village of Mäyrhofen, combined the peaceful and law-abiding professions of tailor, hair-dresser, and guide, told me, with a knowing wink, that the *gemsbart* on his hat had once adorned the back of a

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chamois, shot by himself on the Rach-Kaar—the best drive, by the way, in our preserve!

The women of the Tyrol are justly celebrated for their good looks; and the Zillerthaler girls, in particular, famous for their beauty. Large bright eyes; a laughing merry face, and an exquisite wild-rose complexion—such are their striking features. Their figures may not be as “pinched in” as the dictates of fashionable beauty require, and their faces may be more round than oval; but they are very pretty, for all that. The men, too, are well set-up, sturdy, handsome fellows. It must strike a stranger to the Tyrol how very seldom he sees an absolutely plain man or woman.

The Tyrolese dress is charmingly picturesque, though it is too well known to need much description. Green is the national colour. The colour of the men's short frieze jackets varies in each valley: in one, it will be black; in another, red; in the Zillerthal, it is a light grey. The shape and decorations of a woman's hat, too, show the district from which she comes. The Zillerthaler hat is black, shaped like an inverted saucer, and is adorned with a golden cord, and two golden tassels that hang over the brim in front.

Men and women alike wear the heavy mountaineering boots—the edges of the soles and heels surrounded with a formidable row of gigantic flange-

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nails. Crampons, or *steigeisen*, are worn in the winter, and in that season they are an absolute necessity to the chamois-hunter. One must grow accustomed to them, however ; till one has done so, they are even a source of danger, the sharp spikes being apt to trip up the beginner.

The *bergstock* is one of the most important points of the equipment of the mountaineer. It should be of hazel (for the sake of lightness), strong enough to bear one's whole weight without bending, and a foot higher than the person who uses it.

The number of tourists who lose their lives each year in the mountains is extraordinary, generally either through being unprovided with the necessities for climbing, or in venturing on dangerous places without guides. The summer of 1896 was particularly remarkable for the number of fatal accidents in the Tyrol.

The Tyrolese are excellent guides. Absolutely reliable and sure-footed themselves, they take the greatest care of their *Herrn*, and never lose their heads in a moment of danger.

An elderly *träger*, who always went with the Prince during our time in the Tyrol, had a remarkable adventure a year or two back. I give the story, as I know it to be perfectly true, and it shows the courage and resource of the old fellow.

He was guiding a tourist over a dangerous bit of

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mountain in the neighbourhood of Mäyrhofen. The tourist avowed himself to be an experienced mountaineer, who knew neither fear nor giddiness ; but on coming to a ledge of rock, only some few inches wide, that had to be crossed, old Jörgel insisted on attaching a rope to his waist. Well it was that he did so !

On one side of the ledge yawned a precipice, hundreds of feet deep ; and on the other, the mountain rose straight up in a solid wall of rock.

The tourist went bravely forward for the first few steps, whilst the guide followed him, rope in hand. After some five yards, however, the tourist turned giddy. Pale and trembling, he leant against the mountain for support, unable to move backwards or forwards. Jörgel vainly urged him either to go on or to turn round ; but the man was perfectly helpless, and seemed to be losing consciousness.

Planting his foot firmly on the edge of the narrow ledge, and leaning back with all his force against the rock, the guide quietly pushed his charge over the precipice ; then, with one great effort, he swung him back to the safer place they had just left !

Jörgel told me this story as if it were a mere everyday occurrence.

Is there any one who leaves the Tyrol without regret—who does not long to return—to breathe again its pure clear air—to see its snow-clad peaks



OLD JÖRGEI.

TYROL AND THE TYROLESE

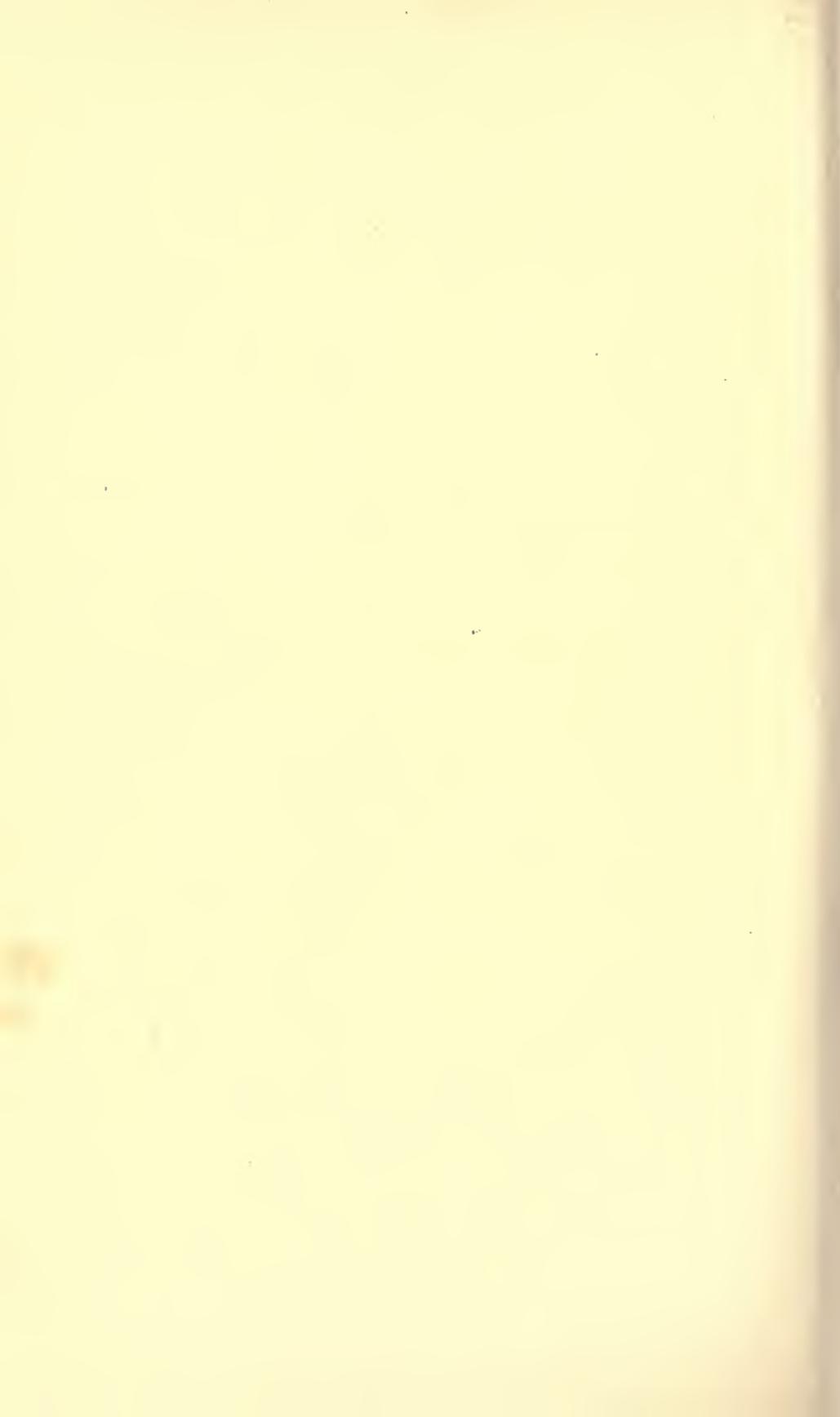
rise white against the blue of the cloudless sky, the first beams of the rising sun gleam golden through the mists of morning, the last rays of the departing day linger in the rosy west—to hear again the salutation of the mountaineer, the sweet “God greet thee!”—to feel once more the friendly clasp of his firm strong hand?

I think not!



XVI

INNSBRUCK





“HEMMEE IN BY MAJESTIC MOUNTAINS.”

Innsbruck

ANY sketch of the Tyrol, however slight, that did not contain some few words with regard to its capital, would be imperfect.

Probably nowhere throughout the world can a town of equal importance be found amid surroundings of such majestic grandeur. It seems as if Nature herself had striven to form an idyllic spot upon which to build it!

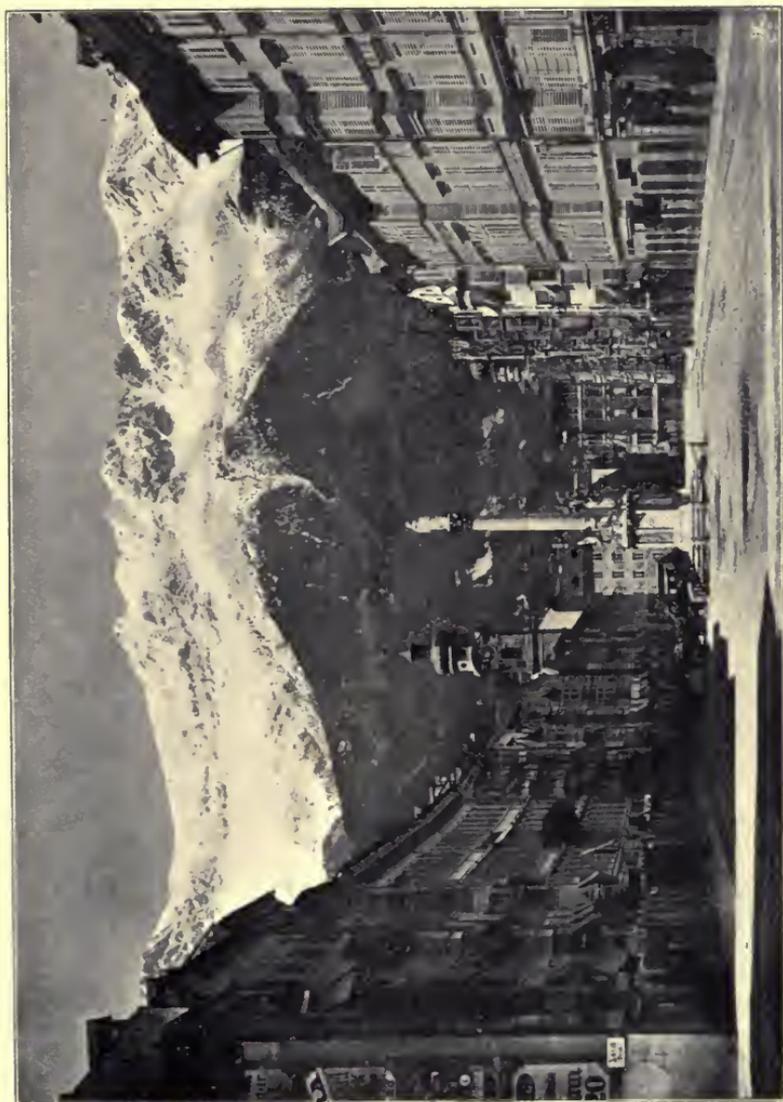
Resting in a green valley, on the banks of the tumbling Inn, and hemmed in on every hand by majestic mountains, Innsbruck stands unique. From the very streets superb views of snow-clad mountain ranges open out at every turn.

Easily accessible as it is, being on the two main lines of railway—the Brenner and the Arlberg—it is, of course, over-run with tourists. But here, at least, one can forget “the madding crowd” in the beauty of the scenery. In Innsbruck Nature reigns supreme: there is no getting away from her—one cannot ignore her. *Maria Theresienstrasse* itself, the Bond Street of the Tyrolean metropolis,

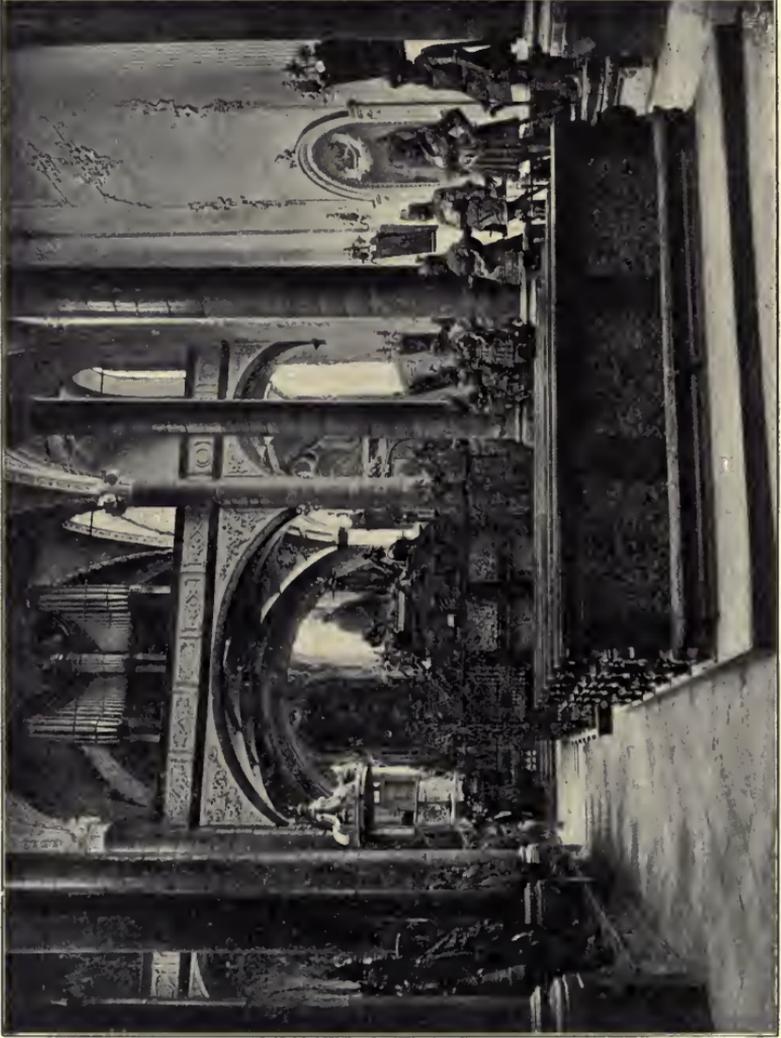
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appears blocked at its northern end by a vast wall of mountain. One has but to raise one's eyes, as one walks along its thronged pavement, to roam in spirit on the snowy steeps, to hear the whistle of the startled chamois, to pluck the star-like *edelweiss* from its stem.

The town, with its many relics of mediæval times, is a happy hunting-ground for the antiquary and the disciple of Art. Among its numerous interesting features, none surpasses the old Franciscan church, or *Hofkirche*—built between the years 1553-63, by the then *Römischer König* (who was afterwards the Emperor Ferdinand I.), in memory of his grandfather, the Emperor Maximilian I. The world-famed tomb of Maximilian, with a statue of the Emperor and the figures of the four cardinal virtues on its summit, and the beautiful marble panels that adorn its sides, stands in the centre of the church. On each side of the nave is a row of colossal bronze statues, twenty-eight in all, originally designed as torch-bearers. These all represent historical characters—the heroes of the world of Knighthood—a fitting tribute to the memory of “the last Knight,” as the great Emperor Maximilian was called. Among the statues, two—Arthur of England and Theoderic of Goth—stand out prominently for their beauty of design and delicacy of finish.



MARIA THERESIENSTRASSE—THE PRINCIPAL STREET IN INNSBRUCK.



INNSBRUCK—THE HOFKIRCHE.

INNSBRUCK

There is something in that figure of Arthur that brings a thrill of pride to the heart of every true Englishman. A few bloodless individuals there may be, in whose idea patriotism is a thing to be scouted, and who seem to take a delight in attempting to belittle their native land; but he who can gaze unmoved on the bold, dauntless bearing of his countryman, who can read the simple inscription, "Arthur of England," beneath the noble figure, without holding his head higher for the mere fact that he too is an Englishman, is unworthy of the name he bears!

On the left-hand side of the great door of the church is the tomb of Andreas Hofer, which the Emperor Francis I. erected in 1834, after the body of the patriot had been brought back from Mantua to Innsbruck. On either side of the tomb Joachim Haspinger and Joseph Speckbacher lie buried; and on the opposite wall is a plain tablet with this inscription: "From a grateful fatherland to the sons who perished in the patriotic wars."

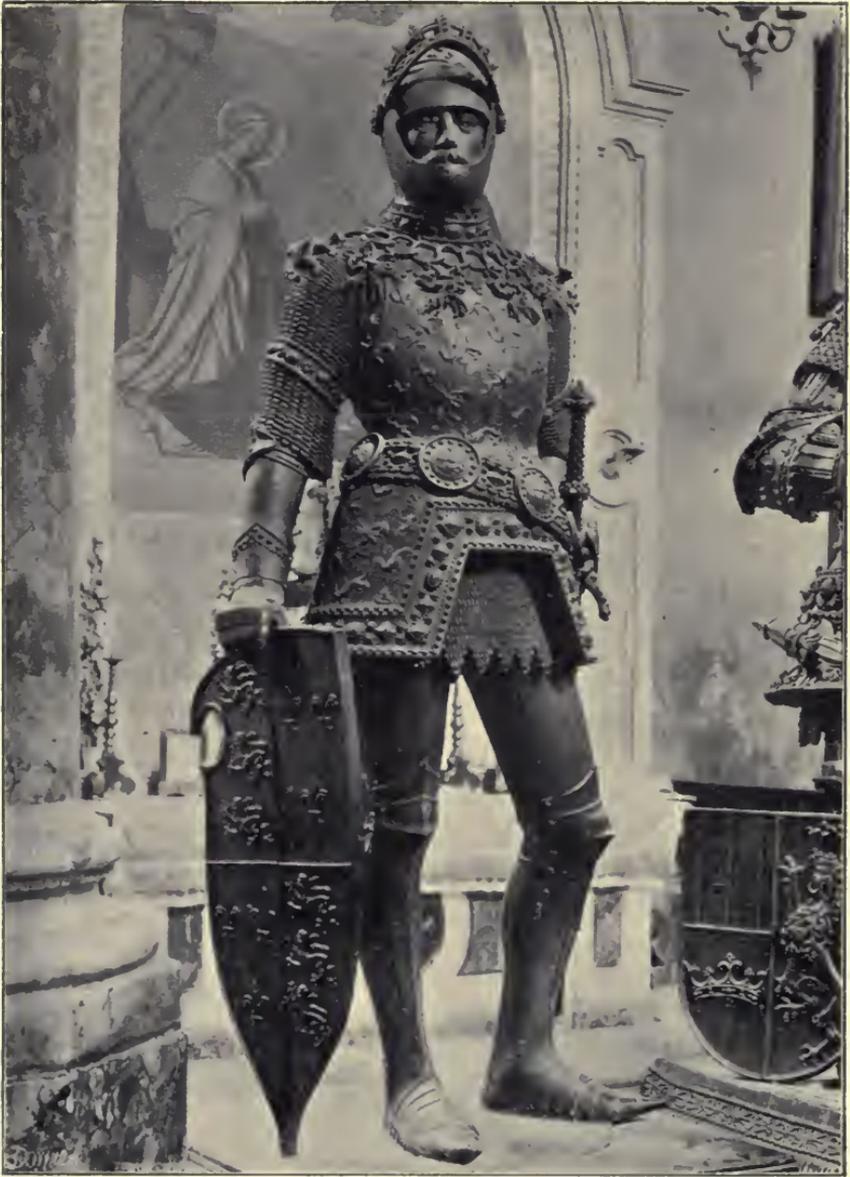
They form a great contrast, these two tombs: the rich grandeur of that of the mighty mediæval Emperor, and the stern simplicity of that of the peasant hero. And yet the two men are bound together by eternal links of sympathy and similarity of purpose. The same love of the mountain land dominated both; the chivalric dreams of Maxi-

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milian, the ashes of the old feudal system, that, to all intents and purposes, died with "the last Knight," were revived in the person of the village landlord—in the rough man who was found ready and willing to stake all for the sake of his country and his master.

The memory of "Kaiser Max" will be always dear to the sport-loving Tyrolese, and indeed to sportsmen in general. The cross-bow and the javelin were the weapons of this Nimrod of the middle ages; and with the former, we are told, he could bring down a chamois at over 200 yards.

Every one who has visited the Tyrol has probably had the *Martinswand* pointed out to them, that frowning perpendicular wall of rock where Maximilian almost lost his life. Advancing along a narrow ledge, the Emperor at length found himself unable to either proceed or retreat; and the spikes of his *steigeisen* having broken one by one, death from starvation stared him in the face. Popular legend relates that an angel from heaven finally rescued the "Kaiser Max"; but "the angel" appears to have existed in the person of a daring chamois-hunter, Oswald Zips by name, with whom the Emperor at length accomplished the almost miraculous descent, and whose salutation, when he saw Maximilian's position, of "Hollo! What dost thou here?" has been handed down to posterity.



ARTHUR OF ENGLAND.



INNSBRUCK

Innsbruck possesses several excellent hotels ; and, of these, the Hôtel Europe, which boasts the superior attractions of an "American Bar," where a beautiful young lady, who speaks English, dispenses bad whisky and worse soda-water to the thirsty Britisher, is perhaps the best. At this hotel we dined on our last evening in the Tyrol—a dinner of many courses, with two white-tied, swallow-tail-coated waiters to minister to our wants. It is all very well to talk of the delights of civilization, but I think we should all have preferred to have been back again in the Zillergrund—in our little hut, with its cramped accommodation and simple fare. I know I should !

* * * * *

Are there any two words that are harder to say than "Good-bye" ? Is anything harder than to bid farewell to those we love, to tried and trusty friends who have stood by us in sunshine and shadow, in failure and success, in difficulties and danger may be ? And this life of ours seems to consist of nothing but an endless succession of "Good-byes !"

"We are all travellers in what John Bunyan calls the wilderness of this world . . . and the best that we find in our travels is an honest friend. He is a fortunate voyager who finds many. We travel indeed to find them. They are the end and the

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reward of life. They keep us worthy of ourselves; and when we are alone, we are only nearer to the absent."

And with these words I end my little volume. To you, my friends—to you who have been the companions of my wanderings—I write these last lines. You, at least, will take my meaning. Perchance, in these sketches—poor though they be—you may catch one ray of a Bohemian sunset—may breathe again a draught of pure, clear air from the snow-clad mountains of Tyrol! If so, I shall be well content.





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