

THE TSCHINGEL CAVE.

FROM A SKETCH BY MRS. W. H. HAWKER.

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leather round the pole, about a foot from the spike; a better plan is to have enough of the wood left projecting, in shaving the pole, to form a ring round it, say an eighth of an inch in depth. I have used one ever since it was first recommended, and cannot speak too strongly of its value. It eliminates the single danger that the handle may slip through the hand, while the axe-head holds firm in the snow, and so renders the anchorage of an axe-head, wherever it will bite at all, perfectly trustworthy.

[During a tour in the Alps, made since writing the above, another reason for preferring an axe was forced on my notice. It occasionally happens that one has to go over a steep slope of grass, and here an axe is invaluable. If the grass be long and wet, or short and dry, and it usually is one or the other, the further one goes the more slippery one's boots become; and a fall on short dry grass may lead to a very dangerous slide. But an axe-head pulls one up in ascending, and anchors one in descending or traversing such a slope, where an alpenstock would be of no service whatever.]

A Chamois Hunt in the Oberland.

By the Rev. W. H. Hawker.

THE season of 1865 was, as most seasons seem to be in Switzerland, an exceptional one; indeed I have never known two alike. I spent the entire summer there that year, and having taken a house at Interlaken for my family, made that place my headquarters. Unfortunately the clouds did the same, and appeared to have secured permanent lodgings on the surrounding mountains; so that the fine weather, which in other districts of the Alps enabled an unexampled number of mountain-tops to be carried about in the knapsacks and luggage of members of the Club, was wholly wanting in the Oberland.

I had fondly hoped to do a little exploring on the main chain about the head of the Valley of Lauterbrunnen; and so often did I start in that direction at the first break in the clouds, only to be repulsed wet through after a mere botanical scramble, that I too, like Messrs. Hornby and Philpott before their fearful expedition on the Silberhorn, became a sort of standing joke to the inhabitants, whose enquiries Ulrich Lauener ever calmly answered with the quiet chaff that we were practising for the passage of the Tschingel Glacier. This probably was the cause of the same severe object being attributed to those gentlemen. Even that blind nuisance who

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makes echoes through a long horn, gave up at last raising his hideous din when he became aware of my approach, regarding me no doubt as a sort of permanent, and to him unprofitable, institution of the place.

The bad weather, however, got tired out at last, for on returning (September 4) from an expedition in the Titlis district, a sharp clear northerly wind promised all that could be wished; the following morning therefore, for nearly the twentieth time, I started for the Tschingel Glacier. Thanks to Whymper, who let me have one of his tents, I proposed to camp on the moraine above the Tritt, and as we had plenty to carry, I went in for luxury, and took as porter an old hunter, Heinrich Fentz, in addition to Ulrich and Christian Lauener. At the Steinberg chalets we got a supply of milk, and before quitting the trees cut a stock of firewood, a rugged faggot of which falling with other trifles to my lot to carry, incommoded me much on the otherwise easy rocks.

The Laueners were aware of a cave above the Tritt, which they thought might do to camp in, and to it we at once went. As nothing could be more convenient than this cave for any one exploring the district, I wish particularly to call attention to it. Its being a couple of hours nearer the ground than the Steinberg chalets is a great advantage, it is incomparably a more comfortable place to sleep in than those filthy hovels, and by taking with one a supply of desiccated milk for one's matutinal café au lait, one may avoid the détour to the chalets altogether. It is a few minutes to the right of the regular beaten track, is about 18 ft. deep by 15 ft. wide, and 10 ft. high at its mouth; has some convenient ledges to put one's things on, lots of loose slabs with which we made table, seats, and fireplace; some contiguous patches of nettles and monkshood supply means for a luxurious couch, and there is a spring a little below it which runs long after the other rivulets about have been frozen up.

The next morning we started at 4·30, walked to the Petersgrat, and thence ascended the Tschingelhorn, one of the points from which I had long wished to see the view. We at first tried to follow the arête from the Petersgrat, which we found quite as impracticable as it looks from below. As it was we spent a disagreeable hour on it, and were then glad to escape by a couloir on to the glacier; after which we skirted the base of the rocks until we came right underneath our mountain, which on this, the south side, consists of a steep cliff surmounted by a rounded summit of snow. We went straight up this cliff, beginning with a couloir down which a

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slight stream was flowing, which whenever I put up an arm in climbing diverted itself into my sleeve and emerged as a bubbling brook at my neck, to my exceeding discomfort. Fortunately a great rock bowling down within a foot or two of us warned us to quit the couloir, so we took to the rocks, which on the whole were good, except at one place, where there were some very large slabs affording but scant footing. Upon a ledge of these nearly 2 in. wide, the Laueners requested me to amuse myself while they performed some singular gymnastics, which I watched with interest, as had they come to grief (which appeared not impossible), I should, I imagine, have been there still. In the end, however, we got to the top at 11.30, having been 3 hours and 20 minutes from the Petersgrat, of which an hour was lost on the arête. The heat was very great; I was therefore not sorry to cut off the top of the mountain, which was pure ice, and eat it to the Queen's health; and this being the first time it had been ascended, we went through the form of making a small cairn as near the top as we could find any rocks. The day was cloudless, and the view, especially of the Nesthorn, Jägihorn, and Bietschhorn, exceedingly grand, and would well repay the trouble of the détour to anyone crossing to or from the Lötschenthal. It took us 1½ hours to descend the cliff, the utmost care being necessary; the Laueners, however, thought that another time it might be more easily ascended by going farther on before ascending the rocks. We reached the Petersgrat at 2.10, and in 1¾ hours arrived at our cave.

I had had very little sleep on the previous night, in consequence of a variety of incongruous noises kept up by Fentz, who began by going to sleep with an empty pipe in his mouth, at which he kept sucking so violently that he converted it into a musical instrument of the direst kind: we gained nothing by its falling at last out of his mouth, as he then began to talk and gesticulate in his sleep, and no amount of knocking him on the head with a boot would stop him for more than a few minutes at a time. To-night we took away his pipe and deposited him on a ledge outside the cave, where, if he resumed his antics, he would roll to the glacier below. The cure was perfect, for he remained as still as a mouse till morning. We rather overslept ourselves in consequence; nevertheless at 5.50 we were off again, leaving the tent in the cave for future use, and sending him down to Lauterbrunnen with the luggage.

The state of the glaciers at this season forbade any attempt at exploring the neighbourhood of the Mittaghorn and Grosshorn. I therefore decided on having a look at the country

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about the Gamchi Lücke, being led in that direction by an allusion in Mr. Ball's Guide to the possibility of a pass being made from there into the Kienthal, and also by the assertion of the guides that my oft-repeated desire to see some chamois would be gratified here, as, if there was only one left in the Oberland it would be found about the Gamchi Glacier.

My experience of chamois had been hitherto limited to the graven images of the animal produced by those extortionate carvers in wood one meets with at all the low-level places of resort, and the too-frequent sham horns on ladies' alpenstocks; for truth forbids one to include in the category the daily 'gemsbraten' supplied at the hotels on the Wengern Alp and elsewhere to confiding travellers by the contiguous flocks of thriving goats. Moreover, I had seen occasional footprints in the snow, and had now and then come upon a dead one on the ice: this summer I had found three dead ones near the Jungfrau Joch. I therefore hailed with joy the idea of seeing something of the animal in a natural state.

We reached the Gamchi Lücke at 7.40, and I was a little disappointed with the view, and certainly think it scarcely repays one for the trouble of scrambling up the rather awkward slope to get to it, merely to return to the Tschingel Glacier again. Finding the ice-wall too steep and hard to cut our way down, we took to the rocks on our right, and descended as best we could. At one *mauvais pas* we had to crawl along a narrow sloping ledge of red slate, the rocks overhanging so that we were obliged to go on hands and knees, the nearest object below being the glacier at a great depth beneath us. At another place we had to glissade down a very steep couloir of loose stones, till just as we got close to the point where they shot over the precipice we had to spring from them on to a rock which jutted out, and gave a chance of turning a very perpendicular spur. We must have set some hundreds of tons of stones in motion, which poured with deafening roar in a stone 'staubbach' on to the glacier below. In about three-quarters of an hour we got there too, but after zigzagging among the séracs and crevasses for an hour or so, we were glad to quit it again, and get along the moraine until the great mass of the Büttlässen came in our way; round the skirts of this we worked up to the Sefinen Furke; and thence to Mürren, where, after sharing a bottle of champagne between us, we walked down in a little less than an hour to Lauterbrunnen, reaching it in time for a good rest before table d'hote.

In the course of the day I was able to verify Ulrich's asser-

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tion that the Gamchi Glacier was emphatically 'Die Heimath der Gemsen,' for we came upon several groups of them: the first, a herd of fifteen, which we saw below us at the foot of a cliff, and whom we greatly surprised by suddenly rolling big stones over at them and shrieking horribly. Finding their retreat up the valley unexpectedly cut off, they were for a few moments much demoralized, but at length took flight across the glacier and up the crags of the Wilde Frau, where they got upon a ledge, from which the guides said there was no exit, and where, had we been armed, we might have followed them and had good sport; indeed with good rifles in experienced hands a great bag might have been made that day.

We subsequently saw a troupe of eight, who retired up the Gspaltenhorn; then seven scurried before us over the Büttlässen; and our last glance down at the glacier showed us a family party of three at the edge of it, whom I implored the guides not to scare by their usual savage yells; and we left this domestic trio of father, mother, and child in peace. We also found tracks where others had stampeded on our approach without our having chanced to notice them.

The sight of so much game quite decided me to fulfil a long-cherished wish to see something of the mode of hunting the chamois, and I made arrangements with the Laueners for the purpose. In the meantime, as the season does not open in the Canton of Berne until October 1st, I persuaded my wife to accompany me over the Tschingel Glacier to Kandersteg. By sleeping at the Tschingel cave we had plenty of time to make the détour to the Petersgrat, and vary the otherwise rather dull expedition by the exquisite view from that ridge. We were also fortunate two days after in getting a perfectly clear view from the top of the Altels.

A 'permis de chasse' for chamois costs 100 francs, but, fortunately, my house belonged to the Prefêt, who very kindly gave me a certificate for the few days I wished to be out; and accordingly, on Monday, October 2nd, I joined the Laueners at Lauterbrunnen, and taking Henrich Fentz as porter, we went up and slept at Mürren. Starting next morning at 4, we stumbled along by lantern light for an hour or so, and as soon as it was light a dog we had brought was sent down to beat the Sefinenthal to our left; the object being to make sure of not leaving any chamois behind us, for the whole valley having been for some time quiet and free from sheep, there was no knowing how low down the game might not have come.

We had not been long on the Sefinen Alp when Ulrich gave us a sample of his marvellous keenness of vision by pointing

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into the distance and saying that there were two 'gems' asleep. Neither Christian nor I could see them at all with the naked eye, even after we had made them well out with a glass. Ulrich went off to stalk them while we lay still and watched, and he was getting on capitally when, unfortunately, our dog went off in hot chase after some animal that took him towards the Gspaltenhorn, whose many precipices, setting all their echoes to work, produced the effect of a thousand hounds in full cry, soon rousing our chamois, who went straight up the Schilthorn and were lost to us.

On arriving at the chalets on the Sefinen Alp we deposited our luggage, breakfasted, and started off for the real work of the day. The guides should have learnt by our recent experience that we were amongst the game, but beyond speaking low, and keeping in the dog, who was a clever well-trained animal, no especial precautions were taken; the rifles were all slung at back (Christian carrying mine as well as his own) to enable us the better to examine the rocks with our glasses, when suddenly we came over a little grassy knoll upon fourteen chamois lying asleep right out in the open within thirty yards of us!

Never were rifles more quickly unslung, and never also did 'gems' get under way with greater celerity. They had got about 150 yards off, when Ulrich and I each had a very fair though fruitless shot at the herd, as it picked its way carefully up the steep moraine on our left, and made for the Büttlässen.

After watching them out of sight we turned round and looked at each other, and I am bound to confess that after a pause the word 'Dummheit' was uttered with varied but self-convicting emphasis by us all. It being decided to follow them, we clambered up in about an hour to the spot where we had seen the last of them (it did not take them much more than ten minutes), near to a remarkable rock called the 'Gems Kapelle,' beyond which the rocks are very dangerous, so much so, that the Laueners afterwards told me that if the twenty best chasseurs in all Switzerland were picked out, there would probably not be five of the lot who would dare to cross them; indeed the very rock, 'Gems Kapelle,' is so named from the fact that, when the hunter sees a chamois reach it, he exclaims, 'Du bist frei,' and considers that it has gained its sanctuary.

On a pinnacle some distance beyond this rock I was placed with Fentz, and the Laueners followed the herd. According to their account there was a point farther on at which the track

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bifurcated: if the chamois had taken the lower, we should have to say good-bye to them, as they could get thence by the head of the Sefinenthal on to the skirts of the Gspaltenhorn; if, however, they had taken the upper track, my *jägers*, as I must now call them, would be able to follow them up until they could get no farther, and then drive them back to me. I could not persuade myself for a moment that our herd, after such a fright, would stop short of the Gspaltenhorn; but there was a chance of there being others on the upper track, where there was a little pasture.

We were all anxious to make up for our owlish stupidity and unreadiness down below; and although I began to warm to the work, and would rather have gone on with the Laueners, not knowing till afterwards of the exceeding danger of the rocks, I felt that their plan was a sensible one. Accordingly they went and I waited; and a dismal time I had of it for some hours, afraid to move hand or foot, and ever on the *qui vive;* as although the chamois would have to come broadside on by me, perched as I was on my pinnacle outside, there was only one spot at which I could shoot with any chance of the game not falling over the precipice. I whiled away a part of the time by watching the graceful movements of a wall creeper (*Tichodroma muraria*), one of the most exquisitely lovely of birds, which fearlessly came fly-hunting within a few feet of my face. As the afternoon wore on, however, it left me. I then cheered myself by fancying that I heard the echoes of a shot or two. At length, perceiving some small stones falling near me I looked up, and saw just above me on the almost sheer precipice, four chamois picking their way, slowly and with the extremest care, along an almost imperceptible ledge. They had no doubt winded me, as I had been troubled by observing that what wind there was blew in that direction, and having enemies behind them were now making a desperate attempt to escape.

It being certain that if I got a shot at this place at all, it would be at close quarters, my rifle had been changed for a double-barrelled smoothbore loaded with slugs. Here, then, was a certainty. I might have picked out the first and third, who in their fall might very probably have overthrown one or both of their companions; but a glance below showed me that there was nothing whatever to prevent their falling many hundred feet to where we could not have got at them; and much as I longed to pull trigger, I could not bring myself to do so stupid and brutal a thing merely for the sake of being able to brag that I had killed right and left at chamois.

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I now also remembered that the Laueners had said they did not think there was any outlet up there; so I left Fentz in the track I had been so long watching, with orders to drive back anything that came towards him, and clambered up myself to another pinnacle, whence I could command this new pass at a place where I could fire with some chance of retrieving my game. I had not been very long there, when one of the chamois came back, and peeping at me round the corner, gave a shrill whistle and clattered off before I could fire. This proved the Laueners' surmise to be correct, and I longed for their return that we might follow them up.

But I had still to wait, for the long shadows were melting into twilight before Ulrich's cheery voice was heard, and the welcome cries of 'gems' and 'chamois' soon brought me down stiff and half-frozen from my perch. In about ten minutes the Laueners rejoined us, Ulrich shouldering his game in picturesque fashion. They had found by the tracks that our herd of fourteen had escaped by the lower way, but on ascending the other they came upon a fresh herd of eight, grazing on the scanty pasture. These they drove up the rocks till the poor creatures could get no farther, and actually turned and came bounding right down upon them. They fired and killed two: one they got, but the other, shot through the heart, unfortunately leaped high in the air and went right over the precipice, and must have been dashed to pieces on the glacier below. The four I saw were part of this herd, and had time allowed we should certainly have followed them: this was now, however, out of the question, as we had quite as much as we could do to get our game down the steep rocks on to the open country before it got quite dark. So heavy an animal is a great impediment to speed on rough ground, but we reached the valley at last at about 6 o'clock, and at the stream got a good drink of water, and cleaned the chamois.

Having had very little to eat all day, we were now ready for a good meal, and set about preparing it. The wives of the Laueners, when their husbands go out chamois-hunting—but at no other time—provide them each with a bag full of bread, cut into small squares, and fried with butter, pepper, and salt, like that eaten with pea-soup. A handful or two of this they put into hot water, and it at once made a very palatable sort of broth, quenching the great thirst from which we were all suffering, having had no water since breakfast, as everything was frozen hard, and enabling us to await patiently the proper cooking of the rest of our dinner, the most important *plat* being the chamois 'fry,' of which we made one of the best dishes I ever ate.

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The pipes being lighted, we were of course bound to talk the day's work over; and I now learnt how dangerous the rocks had been, Christian saying that on their return he was carrying the dead chamois, but that when they came to the worst part even he, accustomed as he was to rocks, could not carry it over; and he added, with just pride, that he wished I could have seen how nobly Ulrich shouldered it, and walked as upright as a soldier across that fearful place. Ulrich disclaimed all merit, merely remarking somewhat naïvely that he had been more used to carrying chamois; and, indeed, I imagine that few except his poor brother Johann, who lost his life hunting on the Silberhorn, could ever beat him as a chasseur. A few yarns followed, and we were just turning in to sleep in some hay that had been left in one of the granges, when up and spoke Fentz, and suddenly volunteered to start off at once in the moonlight, carry the chamois down to Mürren, and bring us back a supply of wine, which we much needed, having brought very little with us. The old man had been curled up asleep under a rock the greater part of the day, and was now as fresh as a 'three-year-old.' So we let him go and turned in, and he got back in time to call us next morning soon after 4.

This time we made for the Sefinen Furke, where we were to lie in wait while Ulrich went off to the right in order to beat the Gross Hundshorn towards us. We had not long parted from him when Fentz, still lively, pointed out a chamois in front of us, and I soon made out two others. We had a long stalk after them; Christian trying to get round and drive them towards the Büttlässen, where I was to try and intercept them; but they winded or heard us, and went right up the Furke. We followed them over it, and leaving Fentz to watch the pass, descended towards the Gamchi to a noted track, where we awaited the result of Ulrich's drive. After a while we heard the dog, and soon two chamois clattered by us, but too far off for the range of our weapons. Ulrich followed, carrying on his shoulders a poor sheep, which had wandered, and was as nearly as possible starved to death. Besides a single chamois or two, and those we saw, he had found a herd of five, which, however, unfortunately went the wrong way.

Our plan now was to work up the Gamchi Thal, Ulrich taking a higher level than we did; if necessary we were to get over the Gamchi Lücke, and sleep in the Tschingel cave; but, to our disgust, we saw two chasseurs in the valley below us; we therefore relinquished the idea, and returned for another beat

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on the Büttlässen. After a severe climb, I was posted at the spot above the Gems Kapelle where the four chamois had escaped the day before, while the Laueners went farther. Here I waited three hours, nearly frozen to death, till at last the voices of the Laueners reached me from far below; and on joining them, I was rejoiced by finding that they had come upon a couple of chamois, and bagged one of them. So we returned again successful to the Sefinen chalets, and supped once more with hunters' appetites on 'gems leber.'

Next morning rising between five and six, we broke up our camp and strolled down to Mürren; on the way I shot a few Alpine choughs for my collection. After a cup of coffee, we strode joyously and in triumph with our game down to Lauterbrunnen. The place had now a quiet, out-of-season, deserted look about it, but while a substantial breakfast was getting ready, a small crowd, including the Laueners' wives, soon assembled; who, not with echoing guns and cracked alpenhorns, but with kindly greeting, gave us a warm welcome on getting back safe, sound, and successful, from an expedition which had not been unaccompanied by real peril.

After breakfast, we drove down to Interlaken, where finding that my family were all out walking, we had time to erect in the sitting room a trophy of alpenstocks, and hung the two chamois upon them; which greeted their sight as they entered the room on their return, and formed a welcome surprise, as during our absence kind friends, with well-meant croaking, had prophesied that we should certainly get nothing, but probably be all killed ourselves.

I dare say that to those who have been accustomed to hunt 'big game,' the above account might hardly appear worth recording, and they might be tempted to express themselves much as did some Americans of whom I met a party one day, being *all* carried, five men and three women, in chaises-à-porteurs from Lauterbrunnen to see the Staubbach! On being afterwards asked by some one at table d'hote, if the view of the fall had repaid them for the severity of the expedition, one of them replied, 'Well, it's fine, but I guess we could put it 'into Niagara with a teaspoon.'

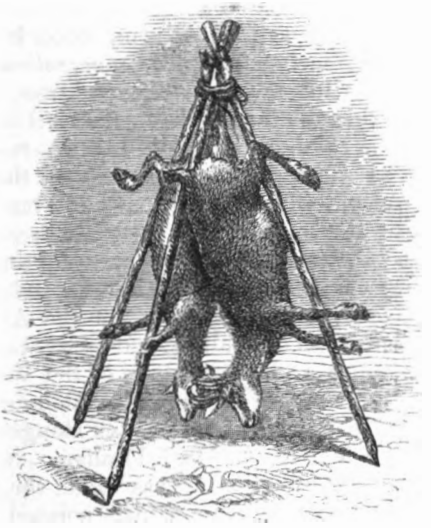
Nevertheless, for my own part, I can say that I found many elements of novelty and excitement in the hunt, as compared with an ordinary Alpine expedition; and I am bound to add, that although it was hard work, I have seldom in my life enjoyed myself more thoroughly than I did in my chamois hunt in the Oberland.

Of the conduct of the two Laueners it is impossible to speak

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in too high terms. I had experienced the quality of each of them before as *guides*, but it seemed really necessary to see them out as *hunters*, unshackled by ropes and Alpine gear, and thoroughly excited by the sport, to realise what they really can do. In short, I can only in conclusion add of them words, which will apply equally well to either—

Take him for your guide,
He has often been tried,
And been ever found useful when needed;
You'll be merry together,
In fair or foul weather,
And you'll shake hands at parting as we did.



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