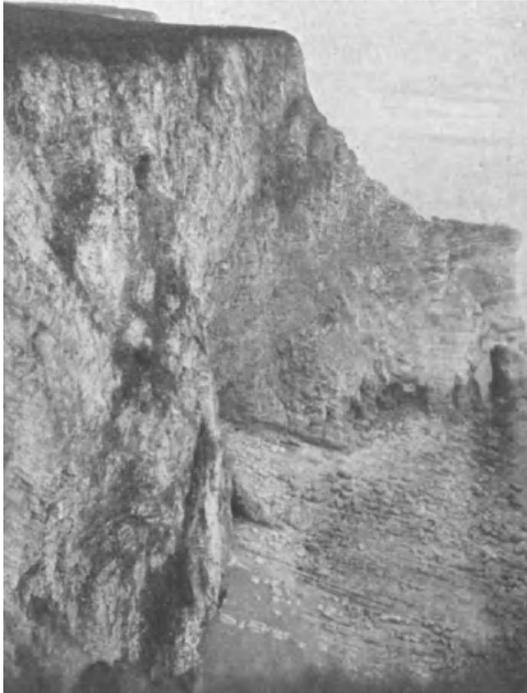


THE PEREGRINE FALCON ON THE
YORKSHIRE CLIFFS.

BY

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IN Seebohm's "British Birds," published in 1883, he states that the Peregrine Falcon has most probably now deserted the cliffs of the Yorkshire coast for ever.



"The Dorr," Bempton Cliffs.

It is pleasant to be able to record not only that they subsequently made their reappearance, but that again this year they have successfully hatched out two

young. After some twenty years' absence from the cliffs a pair was seen in April, 1902, when the hen bird was shot. In 1904 a pair was again seen, but it is thought that they did not remain to breed. In 1906 they took possession of a ledge on a precipitous cliff at Bempton, known as "The Dorr." Here they successfully brought off three young birds. In 1907 they selected the same spot, and reared one. In 1908 they moved their



The Peregrine's Eyrie.

quarters some two miles further north, and, thanks to a reward offered by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union and the protection they enjoy, they again succeeded in bringing up a single chick. This year they are once more in the same spot, and on the 24th of May I took the opportunity of making their closer acquaintance. The cliff at this point is some 400 feet high, higher in fact

than St. Paul's from the pavement to the top of the cross. The ledge is underhung and about two-thirds down the face of a precipitous chalk cliff. It can be seen from a bend above, a hundred yards to the south, and is easily recognised by the green fringe of rank grass growing at the edge.

The professional "climbers" were harvesting the Guillemots' eggs, and I am glad to say that these birds are more numerous than ever, probably due to the close season for collecting the eggs now commencing on July 1st. The birds appear to be in nowise discouraged by the taking of some 130,000 eggs each season from about eight miles of cliff in six weeks.

The "climbers" work in parties of four, one going down, while the remaining three lower and haul, and by preconcerted signals on the rope, those above follow the directions of the man below. I found no difficulty in inducing the party that rents this portion of the cliff to lower me to the eyrie.

It was a calm day, and that delightful babel of noise peculiar to a sea-bird's haunt in spring filled the air. Guillemots and Razorbills lined the ledges and Puffins squeezed themselves into the crevices, Kittiwakes selecting the lower sites near the sea.

Far down below, schools of black dots floated and sported on the glassy sea, diving and chasing one another in full enjoyment of the warm calm day. To my surprise, a pair of Rock-Doves dashed out from behind a chimney of rock not 100 feet above the Peregrines' ledge as I was being lowered, apparently in nowise disturbed by the close proximity of their dangerous neighbours.

The Falcons took alarm as the slack rope was let down, chattering noisily as they went out over the sea. A few quick beats, followed by a lightning sweeping curve on outspread wings marked their graceful and more rapid flight among the direct passage of the innumerable Guillemots.

The ledge was indented in the somewhat hollow-faced side of cliff, but gave sufficient room to move in a bent

position. Two of the three eggs had hatched off, and the young birds, in white down, were about three weeks old. As they were some little way from each other, I put out my hand to move one, that I might take a photograph, which he resented by turning on his back, with beak and talons ready for attack. Nest there was no trace of, but feathers and pellets lay around with the remains of Rock- and Stock-Doves and other smaller birds. As the old birds were somewhat uneasy (though they did not approach so close as when the eggs are near hatching), I soon launched myself once more into space and was hauled up, gathering Guillemots' eggs from the ledges on the way. The "climbers" having a practical interest in protecting the young birds, there is every reason to believe that this pair will be successfully reared, and that the Peregrines will not desert the Yorkshire cliffs for many years to come.