

CHAPTER VI.

THE NORIC ALPS.



1. THE GERMAN ALPS.
2. THE ASCENT OF THE GROSS GLOCKNER.

THE GRONITY



D^r Brunns Route

1. THE GERMAN ALPS.

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FOR many years it has been my habit to spend a few weeks in each summer among the German Alps. Preferring those regions to Switzerland, I have repeatedly traversed their mountains and passes, alone and on foot, superadding to the rare pleasures of fresh air and exercise the more exciting amusement of path-finding, a pursuit which, even amid Alpine fastnesses, is, to those who join early taste with long experience, perhaps scarcely more dangerous than fox-hunting or other recognised amusements of similar character.

After an interval of twelve years, I once more found myself, on August 1861, near the Gross Glockner, and in weather which promised some amends for the disappointments I had formerly suffered, by allowing me at last to make the ascent I had twice been obliged to forego.

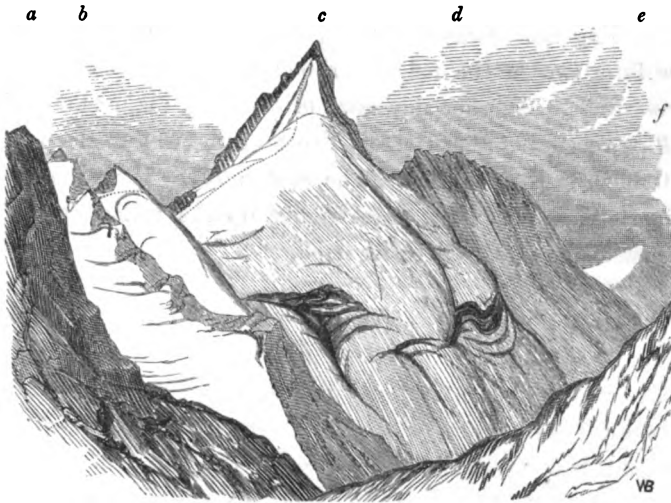
The Gross Glockner may be regarded as a very accessible peak, that offers nothing to deter an average pedestrian. It is about 12,790 English feet in height, and consequently overtops by 150 feet the Orteler Spitz which was formerly considered the highest peak in Germany. It rises from a mass of mountain and glacier, forming part of the main chain of the Alps, 100 miles North of the Adriatic. East of the Swiss frontier, the whole northern slope of the Alps drains its waters into the Danube by a succession of streams, viz., the Iller, the

Wertach, the Lech, the Isar, the Inn, the Salzach, and the Enns. Of these, two only run for any considerable part of their course parallel to the main range; the Inn and the Salzach. At the western extremity of the valley of the Salzach, the main chain widens out into an enormous mass; the chief peak of which, the Grosser Venediger, forms a kind of obelisk, that marks the natural and geographical division of the southern slope of the German Alps. In exact correspondence with the separation of the old Roman provinces, the boundaries of which are still retained in the names "Rhætian" and "Noric" Alps, this great block is the watershed of the southern streams of the general Alpine ridge, which flow eastward into the Black Sea, westward into the Adriatic.

On the northern side of this mass begins the Salzach; into the first half of which, as it flows eastward, there tumble, at right-angled intervals, almost as regular as the successive rungs of a ladder, a series of torrents, coming due northward from the mighty watershed of the Noric Alps. And opposite this point rises the mass which culminates in the Gross Glockner.

East of the Glockner, the main ridge of the Alps is for the most part narrowed to a snow-belt, of one or two miles in extent from its northern to its southern limit. But, about forty miles from the great mass of the Glockner, the mountains tower once more, and the snow limit widens to five or six miles around the Hoch-Alpenspitz; which, with its neighbours the Hafnereck and Sonnenblick, may be almost regarded as the last outposts of the army of these Alpine giants; and eastward of which, the central chain bends northward towards the Radstädter Tauern as a range of mountains of comparatively subordinate import and size. West of the Glockner, the glacier-field contracts to a narrower limit at the Kaiser Tauern, beyond which

it again expands into an irregular field, averaging about three miles in width, of which, as usual throughout the whole Alps, the smaller portion lies on the steep southern declivity. The continuous surfaces of snow and ice thus isolated by the Heiligenbluter Tauern on the E., and less exactly or constantly by the snowy *firn* which usually covers the Alter or Velber Tauern on the W., may be



THE GROSS GLOCKNER FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD OF HEILIGENBLUT.

a Ketterberg. *b* Hohenwartakopf. *c* Gross Glockner, the first or topmost peak having the second foreshortened, below it. *d* Romeriskenwand. *e* Johannesberg. *f* produced horizontally, strikes the crevasse at the foot of the second peak.

estimated as having a total area of not much less than 150 square miles; an extent which suggests some doubt whether the scenery of the German Alps can rightly be regarded as on a small scale, even when compared with Switzerland.

After a few short excursions in the Bavarian highlands, I hastened to Innsbruck, and travelled the same afternoon down the Inn valley to Woergle, thence striking eastward along a post road to Hopfgarten; whence, early next

morning, I made use of the last hour or two of decent weather by ascending the Hohen Salve, a kind of German Righi, which has a height of about 5,870 feet above the level of the sea, and commands one of the widest panoramas in all this mountainous region.

Three days of travelling in continuously wet weather brought me to Wildbad Gastein; where, on the following day, the weather cleared, and left the summits of the surrounding mountains promisingly covered with snow. A walk or two in the neighbourhood filled up a couple of mornings. Another day saw me over the main chain of Alps ascending the Herzog Ernst on the way to sleep at Döllach in the Möllthal. The next morning I breakfasted in Heiligenblut, a few miles higher up the valley, and in view of the Gross Glockner itself.