2. THE ASCENT OF THE GROSS GLOCKNER.

By William Brinton, M.D.

In spite of two sleepless nights, I was afraid to postpone my excursion, and felt that in such fine weather, it was better to count upon a nap at the Ochsenhütte, where it is usual to halt on the way up the Glockner. So after lounging away the remainder of the forenoon on the hill side above Heiligenblut, and dining at the inn there, I started at 2.30 P.M. with one of the guides, who was to carry the necessary provisions until we picked up the two others on our way.

The afternoon was close and sultry, and the air in the valley perfectly still, so that we took our time up the path which, after crossing the Möll torrent, half a mile or so above the church, ascends the terrace on its right, to turn the projecting shoulder of the Krockerberg, a mountain at the opening of the Leiterthal, a western tributary of the main valley. Shortly before crossing the Leiterbach, at a point a little above the waterfall by which it joins the Möll in the main valley, we were reinforced by the two other guides, and entered upon the Katzensteig, a good though rather rough path, often some two or three hundred feet above the torrent, and on its left bank.

The danger and difficulty of this stage of the ascent have been greatly exaggerated: only one or two places presenting any excuse for the use of hands as well as feet. By and by the steep ridge on the right hand of the path

lowers, the valley opens out, and reveals, a little above the bed of the torrent, a couple of huts which are to afford us our night's lodging.

An easy stroll, in a blazing afternoon like this, scarcely deserves any notice, as regards the time which it has occupied. But what between walking slowly, and halting to give the neighbourhood a careful scrutiny, exactly two hours and a half had been occupied in the march from Heiligenblut.

The *Sennerinn* was away, but we soon discovered her on the mountain side getting grass, and a jödel or two brought her towards us.

Meanwhile sunset approached, and lit up the steep overhanging foot of the Kleine Fleiss Gletscher far off on the other side of Heiligenblut, with a gorgeous rose-coloured light that placed its icy mass in such vivid relief against the deep blue vault overhead us, as apparently to bring it within a tithe of its real distance.

Time slips away quickly on the mountain-side; and the approach of night sent me to my hay-loft; where, rolled up to the neck in a plaid by one of the guides, and then covered lightly over with fragrant hay, I was soon fanned to sleep by numberless delicious little breezes, which crept under the shingles of the roof, and played upon my face with a sedative effect which I could not help thinking a vampire would hardly have surpassed. On the other side of a partition behind me, the guides and the Sennerinn kept up a conversation over the fire in the body of the hut; a talking and laughing, which to my ears gradually became disjointed and amorphous, and finally dissolved into dreams.

By and by I awoke, with a clear perception that the limitary hour of 11.30 P.M. which we had assigned ourselves had arrived. The air smelt of midnight; the whole

Alm was perfectly still. But in a minute or two, there came a slight stir in the hut, a raking of the embers, a knock at the door, and our day had begun. A couple of tumblers of excellent "*café au lait*" were soon despatched, and we started at 12.15 A.M. for the Gross Glockner.

The night was chill and dark; though starlit, and almost cloudless. What little air we found moving came down the valley towards us. The roughness of the path obliged us to take lanterns.

The Sennerinn sends us her blessing, as we march out into the darkness, plunge down the hollow, and cross the plank which leads over the torrent to the path on the other side. At first no one speaks, the silence around is unbroken, save by the dashing of the torrent beneath.

By and by the moon rises, and lights the scenery around us more distinctly. And so we go up and up the Leiterthal, until at length we come to a huge boulder, which marks what was formerly the lowest part of the side moraine of the Gletscher. Under this friendly roof we sit down to divide our store of provisions into three portions — one which each of us carefully stows away precisely in his centre of gravity, at a point (as is well known to physiologists) lying just in front of the vertebral column, and behind the lowest button of the waistcoat; one which, with the kraxe or basket, is left under the boulder to form our dinner on returning; and a third which is carried in a scrip by one of the guides.

Rising to pursue our way, the wind comes down upon us from the mountains over the Gletscher, and hustles us roughly, besides blowing out our lantern once or twice. But soon we climb the sloping foot of the Gletscher, and proceed to put on our Steigeisen or crampons, as well as to tie ourselves two and two, with an interval of some twenty or thirty feet of rope between the attached friends. These

precautions taken, the file again advances, keeping steadily up the glacier towards its central part, where, to the left of the saddle over which we have to pass, the Gross Glockner itself has just come into sight. After crossing a few crevasses, the approach of dawn enables us to dispense with the lantern.

By and by, still going up the glaciers but inclining towards the eastern side, we approach the ridge which descends from the Kellerberg and encloses this side of the Gletscher, mount a steepish slope of snow, and another incline of Geschütt of about the same angle (40°), and come out on the Hohenwartscharte, a Joch or saddle between the Kellerberg and the Hohenwartskopf. We have thus completed the second part of the ascent, and climbed the ridge of the Glockner some 6,500 yards to the S.E. of this peak itself, and at a level of about 2,000 feet below its own height.

The view from this point over the Pasterzen * Kees and the Leiter Kees, east and west respectively, well shows the great difference of level between these glaciers on the opposite sides of the Glockner ridge. The height of the terrace from which the Leiterbach breaks into the Möll, the length of the curved Leiterthal, and its steady gradual inclination upwards to within a few hundred yards of the Hohenwartscharte, are precisely the reasons why it forms the route up the Glockner, as well as why, looking down hence towards the Pasterzen Kees, you see a smooth rounded surface of snow cutting across the line of sight so as quite to prevent any glimpse of the base of the declivity; and showing, in the few yards visible, not only an ugly crevasse or two, but an inclination such, that the

* In the Noric Alps a glacier is called a *Kees*, literally a *cheese*, from its coagulated or curdy appearance.

thought of descending it, even with crampons, makes the soles of your feet tingle.

From the Hohenwartscharte, our course henceforth was north-westerly, on the eastern side of the ridge. Leaving on our left the projection of the Hohenwartskopf — which, though 380 feet above the ridge, seemed little more than a knoll of snow surmounted by rocks, — we passed carefully along the rounded base of the mountain, over snow-fields of variable consistence, but, in the main, neither so soft as to be heavy walking, nor so hard as to be dangerously slippery. In this course we necessarily avoided most of the crevasses which run parallel to the ridge, and mark the sudden increase in the steepness of its eastern slope down towards the Pasterzen Kees. The depth of the *firn* here is of course a matter of the merest conjecture. But I should imagine, from the generally shrunken condition of the glaciers in this region during the protracted heat of the summer of 1861, as well as from the arrangement of the broken edges of the snow-layers on other parts of this ridge, and from the protection which its shape and direction afford this side against direct solar rays, that the *firn* on this ridge is always deep enough to cover the ragged rocks beneath it for a depth of some twenty to forty feet.

We now trudged onwards and upwards over the slope (the fall of which on either hand gave a full view below, with little or no peril), until, first passing along the eastern edge of a long ridge (or rather parallelogram) of rocks, which here forms the crest of the mountain, and then exploring their middle, we reached the Adlersruhe, where we had decided to call a halt and prepare for the final ascent.

The Adlersruhe (Eagle's Nest) is a point which lies near the western edge of the jagged mass of rocks here forming

the crest of the mountain, and is occupied by the remains of a hut, said to have been built by Prince Salm in 1800, at the time of the first ascent. Our guides suggested for it the name of the "Glockner Hotel," or "*Gasthof zum Alten Mann;*" and we agreed that visitors would find the charges moderate, with no extras, and all wines carefully iced by the landlord himself. The want of roof, door, and windows, and the difficulty of access, are, however, drawbacks. It is stated that the whole hut once disappeared for some years together, being completely covered by the glacier,—I presume by the *firn* descending from above. But judging from other accounts, it seems quite as likely that its concealment was effected by the winds heaping up a snow-board (Schneebrett) from the western side. However this may be, the position is evidently much too exposed to form a good post of continuous observation.

By the time we had reached this shelter, the wind was blowing quite hard enough to make it a pleasure to sit down under the lee of its low walls for a few minutes. Soon, however, we quitted it, and left the rocks once more for the open snow, the rounded surface of which, as before, formed the highest part of the ridge, and commanded the valleys on either side. Looking down on the left, for instance, we saw a vast compartment of the glacier, separated from the mass further south by a kind of rocky rib, which sank down towards it from the rocks we had just left, and only subsided where the descending slope of the glacier turned an angle to join the branch of the glacier we had ourselves climbed by. And, to my great delight, two tiny black specks, which, though conjecturally some mile and a half distant, looked to my straining sight too flat, too uniform, and too isolated for rocks, began, just as I was gazing at them, a perceptible

movement, that made me no longer hesitate to pronounce them unmistakable chamois. Great was the amusement of the guides at what they fancied an effort of the imaginative enthusiasm common to tourists, and nothing but my having a telescope at hand would perhaps have convinced them. These graceful creatures were trotting lightly and cautiously over the glacier, apparently quite unconscious of our presence. That we should not have been seen by them is intelligible enough, forming, as we did to their view, four small black dots against a blazing white snow-field, and near plenty of rocks not very unlike us in shape and size. But considering that we were laughing and talking, and that the wind was blowing hard from where we stood in their direction, it did seem as though either their senses of hearing and smell were casually blunted by the pre-occupation of crossing the dangerous glacier, with its crevasses hidden by snow, or that the wind which howled about our ears failed to dive deeply enough into the valley to reach them. On raising our voices to a shout, they stopped short and looked suspiciously round, but without seeing us. A second shout exposed us, and after a single glance they broke into their light swinging gallop, the largest (a buck) going first, until they were speedily lost behind a projection of rock.

After this momentary interruption, we stepped out briskly up the snowy ridge; from whence, looking towards the N.E., we saw the sky,— elsewhere bright enough, here of a very ugly dun colour,—suggesting the approach of even a stronger gale from that quarter than we were now experiencing. On it came, indeed, quickly enough, to the disgust of the guides, who spoke of it spitefully as a "*Salzburger Wetter*," coming from a quarter which in this region generally proves a stormy one, devoid of all the

urbanity one might expect in a visitor from the capital city of the province on this northern side of the mountain. Harder and harder did it blow, until we fairly leaned towards the eastern or Pasterzen slope, to avoid being blown away. All of a sudden came a series of smart cuts against my face; and on looking to windward, with a schoolboy's sense of injury at the unfair hardness of this variety of snow-balls, I saw a whole flight of flat white-looking things, which rose from the rounded shoulder of the mountain some distance below us, and came skimming upwards on the wind. Not wishing to be cut dead, I discreetly turned away my face, but managed to catch one or two of them with my hands in passing. They were plates of ice, of one or two lines in thickness, and several inches in surface, delicately skimmed off the top of the firn by these tremendous blasts of wind, and set whirling at a pace which really made them dangerous to the face and eyes. By and bye, when these strange travellers had all hurried over the ridge out of Salzburg into Tyrol, and any further liberation of such ice-plates seemed to be prevented by the greater cohesion and softness of the now denuded firn, the wind increased so greatly in violence, that there was really nothing for it but to lie down on the snow during each blast; and it seemed almost a question whether the steep ice-slope, up which we should have to hew our way as the next stage of the ascent, could be attempted at all. However, a little patience soon mended matters. The "old man," apparently satisfied with our repeated prostrations before his throne, relented; the wind gradually lulled; and by the time we had reached the foot of the steep incline that begins the peak of the Glockner, there was no wind more violent than promised just to season our climbing with an additional motive for keeping our toes in the steps—if, indeed, we did not escape the blasts al-

together by the inclination of our ice-ladder to the western or leeward side of the peak.

The cone which, bifurcating at its summit, forms the two points of the Glockner, starts from what I believe to be a constant crevasse, that passes almost transversely across the ridge along which we had ascended from the S. The crevasse itself I could distinguish from Heiligenblut with the naked eye: so that it is justifiably indicated in the sketch (p. 444) from this place. In our ascent we found it about six or seven feet wide, its northern edge being about five feet higher than its southern one. But a tongue of ice near its middle offered an easy jump, and a single step cut in its upper margin made its further transit safe enough. Henceforward we ascended by hewing a series of steps, which, carefully placed for the right and left foot alternately to the number of some two or three hundred, took us up the ice-slope that led, with an angle of 50°, to the second peak.

The second peak, so called because it is the first arrived at, is a part of the general ridge, about 200 to 250 yards to the S.E. of the highest peak, and about fifty feet lower. Its summit, nowhere quite level, is wide enough to allow a group of a dozen people to stand upon it. Our stay here was short. Looking well to our ropes, we climbed down a steep slope, apparently consisting of large blocks of rock, of which the interstices were here and there snowed up into continuous walls and flats of snow, like a series of gigantic steps. In bad summers, this steep and treacherous snowy surface is sometimes scarcely to be passed, save by slinging the tourist down the single declivity into which these steps have then been transformed. We found it easy enough, the amount of snow being probably at its *minimum*. On reaching the bottom of this slope, we found ourselves on the southern brink of a picturesque-

looking chasm, which cuts athwart the ridge, and is traversed only by a beautiful slender edge of snow, to right and left of which the slope of the mountain on either hand seems scarcely less than 65°, 70°, or 80°,—in fact little better than a precipice. The length of this snow-crest is estimated in Baedeker's Handbook at 60 fathoms; but I should judge that it scarcely exceeds as many feet. Its width, until trampled out, is *nil*,—a mere edge of snow, which, like the mythical bridge (*Al Sirat*) that leads to the Mahometan paradise, can only be traversed in safety by those accustomed through life to walk uprightly. Not having the post of honour, I found it already a respectable track of some six or eight inches in width, when I crossed. However, my transit seemed the completion of a kind of graduation in the eyes of the guides, who thereafter allowed me to climb up the broken rocks which rise at an angle of about 60°, from the northern end of this snow-ridge to the highest peak, and even permitted me to retain my alpenstock in one hand, and climb exclusively with the other. In a minute or two this final ascent was effected, and the summit was won.

It was now 6.45 A.M.; so that we had been exactly six and a half hours in ascending from the Leiterhütte. In addition to various short halts, we had made one or two serious assaults upon our food,—assaults which, even when I could not aid in them, it was pleasant (not to say tonic) to look upon. Nevertheless, the guides assured me that they had never before gone so quickly, or reached the summit so early.

Doubtless we had been somewhat favoured by the weather. But on the whole, I suspect that the slowness of many of the previous ascents was due neither to the weather nor to the guides; and venture to predict that, with fewer guides, and a smaller burden of provisions, some

of my countrymen will hereafter make this ascent in as little as four and a half or five hours from the Leiterhütte.

No reader expects me to describe what we saw, or even to record my impressions. But I think that a tall peak, which a pedestrian has never ascended before, generally gives him an impression, as he gains its summit, of being suddenly carried there, as though into another world. The vast panorama leaps into the eyes and sinks down deeply into the brain, there to remain (it may fairly be hoped) for a lifetime. So delightful is this feeling that, even supposing the last few hundred yards of ascent do not demand undivided attention,— even if the peak do not shut out the coming prospect, or the continuous watchfulness over hand and foot,— the careful scrutiny ahead for this little edge of rock which is to be grasped by the fingers, or of that little fissure which will first receive the toes, equally forbid all further prospect,— I suspect the wary pedestrian rather defers than anticipates his pleasure. And then, on reaching the summit, as he turns round to all points of the compass, and everywhere sees the giant forms of the surrounding mountains,—a stately company of hundreds and thousands, sitting in open ranks, that fade away in apparently endless perspective, — it is only in a geodetic sense that he looks down on them. Mentally, indeed, he wonders and reveres, like the dazed Gaul on entering the Roman senate; and since the rarity of human footsteps in these solitudes sets him speculating as an involuntary antiquarian upon previous visitors, he feels little surprise that our heathen predecessors on this earth worshipped in high places, or roamed with Bacchus on the mountains.

After all, the best way to convey an impression of the Gross Glockner is to describe it as being, not a "specular mount," with a wide view like that from the shoulder of the Monte Viso, over Italy, but rather the topmost of a

throng of peaks; — an assembly of giants, towered over by a chieftain, himself taller by head and shoulders than them all. Plains and cities are almost wanting, save in the rarest and clearest weather. Mountain peaks, deep valleys, distances of incredible perspective, sky and cloud of all imaginable hues and consistencies,—these are what I saw.

From the northern to the western point of the compass rose darkly against the sky, about seventy miles off in a direct line, a host of familiar forms of various mountains in the Bavarian Highlands, from which many a time had I gazed away a long summer's day, sweeping with my telescope over the very peak on which I was now standing,— the Halsl Spitz, the Planberg, the Risser Kogl, the Roszstein, the Uunütz, and others. The quadrant ranging from the N. to the E. was still sailed over by occasional clouds, through the breaks in which, however, were seen the well-known outlines of the Tannengebirge and the Uebergoszene Alp, cloven into two enormous masses by the valley leading to Salzburg, and, to the left of these, the Steinernes Meer and the Watzmann. On the south-east came the Goldberg group; among them the Herzog Ernst, which I had climbed two days before, and the Hochnarr, which I climbed two days after, both respectable mountains, each of ten or eleven thousand feet in height. To the S. lay the Italian Tyrol, and to the W. the chief peaks of the Rhætian Alps, all still rosy with the dawn, and sharply defined at distances which, in the case of the Wild Spitz in the Oetzthal, and the Orteler Spitz, respectively attain 115 and 130 English miles in a direct line. Nearer still were the Gross Venediger and the Drei Herrn Spitz, placed at the head of the Ziller Thal, as the bounds of the Noric and Rhætian Alps, which latter mountains seemed to shut out the view of some of the higher Swiss Alps, and especially of the Bernina. Of the valleys, the most noticeable, after the

vast field of the Pasterzen Kees below us on the E., were those of the western declivity: the ravines of the Ködnitz and of the Teischnitz Bach from the glaciers on this side of the Glockner, tributaries of the Dorfer Bach, which occupies the long valley that runs southward under the Glockner range from the Kalser Tavern; and beyond this the parallel valley which runs down from the Velber or Matreier Tauern, and which, where its southern end opens out to receive at an angle the Isel Bach from the W. is occupied by the village of Windisch Matrey.

But even mountain ascents have solemnities which seem to claim observance before an undivided attention can be given to the scenery. Eating and drinking, in however small a quantity, are acts which seem to propitiate the "old man" towards his visitors. And after we had duly fulfilled this routine, and drank to each others' health, I could do no less than evince my proper feeling of affiliation and respect towards the club of which I have the honour to be a member, by drinking the health of its president. The toast, briefly introduced, was duly responded to: the "Gesellschaft der Bergsteiger" excited much interest, and a very few words descriptive of the courage and experience of its president evoked the enthusiasm of these sympathising mountaineers: so that we shouted out, "Es lebe der Herr Ken-neh-di," with all the honours due to his office, at a level of about 13,000 feet above the sea. Then came another and very different ceremony, never, I believe, omitted by the guides who accompanied me, and so perfectly in consonance with the simple piety of the Tyrolese mountaineer, that it did not strike me as at all unusual. All three knelt down and repeated a short series of prayers, which, so far as I could identify the Latin, seemed to be the "rosenkranz," or rosary that forms the morning prayer of the peasantry of

these valleys. When this had been reverently concluded I rummaged the small field of snow and rock which formed our domain for a couple of tokens, mineral and vegetable, of my visit—finding the one in a small piece of quartz, the other in a lichen, which I scratched off one of the topmost blocks of the pinnacle. Then came another long circumspection over the scene; and at last, after about half an hour of this prospect, the extension of the Salzburger Wetter on the north-east into a dark twirling storm of snow, with misty edges, driven by a wind with a violence bordering on a hurricane, suggested to us that it might be safer to beat a retreat. So we struck our camp, bade farewell to the "old man," and began to descend.

We go down the crag of the topmost peak, across the knife edge of Al Sirat, up again to the second peak, and down our ice-steps to the landing. The "old man," indeed, not only followed us to the bottom of this his staircase, and over the crevasse which forms his threshold, in the shape of a howling wind, and a few tears of melting snow, but, arrived here, his hospitable feelings fairly overmastered him, and he fell on our necks as a tremendous gale, which, in its enthusiasm, quite got the better of us, and all but blew us over the western ridge down the glacier into Tyrol. Here, indeed, occurred the deplorable accident of the excursion. My hat, which I had carefully chosen years before to be comfortable and unconspicuous among its kindred in the Bavarian Highlands, I had cautiously tied on with a string, and, fully confiding in the strength of its attachment, had allowed it to nod its recognition of the attentions of the vagrant wind: when, to my horror, a sudden gust tore it from my head, leaving pendent from my button-hole the string and ribbon. The reader will judge my feelings when

I saw a conical green hat, the companion of so many excursions, revolving with frightful rapidity on its own axis while it careered madly over the smooth snow-slope, down towards the glacier, at a rate of twenty or thirty miles an hour. In an instant I was left desolate, to meditate gloomily over the mutations of the fates, and especially to question destiny why, in all ages and countries, they who sew on buttons and ribbons never sew them on aright. Of course all recovery of the lost hat was hopeless. Doubtless it either rolled into a crevasse, or drifted on to some ledge of snow, to form an exhibition for all the vagrant *gemsen* of the neighbourhood. A handkerchief, covered by a night-cap, which one of the guides fortunately had inside his hat, replaced it for the time. As the sun soon came out hotly enough, I was somewhat in dread of* snow-blindness, yet this, like most of the evils we expect, did not come; and we made a swift and easy descent, after calling at the Adlersruhe again, down to the Hohenwartscharte, and thence descended the Schrund and Gletscher to our store of provisions under the boulder.

From the Ochsenhütte, we rapidly descended the Leiterthal into the main valley, and reached Heiligenblut about 2 P.M. Here the landlord kindly relieved my anxieties, by transferring to me a most respectable new hat, whereunto a tailor at work in the common room of

* It is, however, generally agreed that the unrelieved and monotonous white expanse of snow and cloud on a cloudy day is far more provocative of snow-blindness than the glare of the sun on a bright cloudless day. But it is very questionable how much of this result is really *in* the eye; how much outside the organ, in the moist membrane which covers it and lines the lids. And it is certain that the stratum of cloud modifies both the heat, and the vapour, of the air between it and the snowy surface to a degree that might well account for the resulting inflammation, in which the skin of the face and mucous membrane (*conjunctiva*) of the eye often concur. It is interesting to notice that, in the hot vaporous air of the Japanese Ocean, the effect of cloudy weather in burning the face has been recently noticed (Maury's Geography of the Sea).

the inn affixed the green ribbon of my old one, and so toned down its otherwise too episcopal character. Thus once more equipped for travel in what I really believe was the only new hat within thirty or forty miles, I was able to stroll about the village, and gaze, insatiable, at the scenery around, before spending a delightful evening in the society of the German *savants* — two or three of them of the highest eminence—whom the parlour of

THE CHAMOIS SPIES MY HAT.

this unpretending inn generally contains at this time of the year. Still, however, not the evening, nor the long Sunday of comparative rest which I intercalated between this ascent of the Glockner and a far more difficult excursion on the ensuing Monday, could get my poor hat out of my thoughts. Whether it went down a crevasse; whether, if so, it was destined to turn up again; in how many years; how many yards off; how far bereft of such separable accidents as form and colour it would re-appear

when the "*Kees reinigte sich*," or cleansed itself, by a slow disgorgement, of such indigestible food, remains an open question.

NOTE. — I must acknowledge the obligation I am under, in the compilation of the map, to that published by Dr. Keil of Lienz.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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