

THREE NEW ASCENTS IN THE BERNESE OBERLAND WITHOUT GUIDES.

BY A. LORRIA.

ON July 19, 1885, my friend Lammer and I arrived in Grindelwald. Unluckily the weather seemed to be dead against us; the clouds hung heavy and low right down to the valley, and our prospects were not very cheering. We speculated as to whether we would be able to carry through our plans and whether our forces—for we intended to climb without guides—would be sufficient for the heavy task we had imposed on ourselves. On the 25th we went up to the Bergli hut, and next day did the Jungfrau. On the 27th I remained in the hut owing to slight indisposition, while Lammer alone made an attempt to climb the Mönch. That day Herr Burckhardt, of Basel, with Peter Schlegel and Jössi ascended the Gross Viescherhorn, and on their return could not find words capable of describing the magnificent view they had enjoyed from this summit. This turned our thoughts towards a scheme we had planned in Vienna, of climbing the Hinter Viescherhorn (13,190 ft.). Since Dr. Häberlin's unsuccessful attempt on July 14, 1871,* the peak had not, so far as we could find out, been again attacked. Besides, the Hinter Viescherhorn was the last virgin peak in the Bernese Oberland which is over 4,000 mètres (13,124 ft.) in height.

So on July 28 we started for this ascent at 4.20 A.M. I take this opportunity of pointing out that it is now usual to cross the Vieschergrat, *not* at the point where the enlarged Federal map has the name 'Unter Mönchjoch,' but rather to the S.E. of the hut, at the point marked 3,560 mètres. Formerly, as Peter Kaufmann informed me, the passage was effected to the W. of the point marked 3,630. We crossed the ridge by the depression *farthest* to the E., which was perfectly easy, and brought us nearer our peak. At 4.50 we stood on the ridge. Descending slightly, we kept to the left, and traversed at a level along the slopes of névé; but under the Walcherhorn (which in some copies of the Federal map is *wrongly* called Almerhorn) these became crevassed, and we were gradually forced down on to the Ewig Schneefeld. When we reached the foot of the Hinter Viescherhorn we struck up again to the left, over slopes of névé, the steps cut the day before being still in part visible. We found

* *Jahrbuch des S. A. C.* vol. viii. p. 160.

ourselves now in a veritable labyrinth of crevasses, but were able to avoid the largest séracs by making long zigzags, and thus reached the great *cirque* of rocks and ice which lies between the ridges descending from the Gross and Hinter Viescherhorn. Dr. Häberlin had tried our peak by the S.W. ridge, and had reached a rocky tooth which, when looked at from the Ewig Schneefeld, has the appearance of being the highest point. Lammer wanted to try this ridge again, but I opposed this idea, for I wished to climb up to the gap between the two peaks and make the ascent from that point. Mounting over gently inclined slopes of névé, we gained the foot of the wall leading up to the gap, which, as it does not seem to rejoice in any name, may perhaps be called the Vieschersattel, as it is the lowest point between the two peaks. From the Sattel there runs down a rocky rib which is separated from the big bergschrund by a steep ice wall, on which the traces of falling stones are very plain. The steps cut by our predecessors the day before could still be traced, but had nearly melted away. After hoisting myself over the bergschrund I began to hew a staircase in the hard ice, and when I reached a crevasse running parallel with the bergschrund I made myself secure, and Lammer came up in my steps. After crossing three similar crevasses, and cutting many other steps, we got on to the lower end of the rocky rib mentioned above. The rocks were easy though rotten, and at 9.20 we were on the Sattel. A remarkable sight here met our eyes. Right away stretches the table-like upper névé of the Walliser Viescher glacier. This is bounded on the N. by the ridge between the Gross and the Klein (or Ochsenhorn) Viescherhorn; to the E. it falls in precipitous slopes of rock and ice down to the Upper Eismeer; to the W. it is limited by the ridge between the Gross and Hinter Viescherhorn; and to the S., first by the rocky east ridge of the Hinter Viescherhorn, and lower down by a tangled mass of séracs which leap down in a wild icefall towards the Walliser Viescher glacier.

Close to the Sattel there is a hollow in the level and uncrevassed snow plateau, in which we spent half an hour sheltered from the wind. Then striking away to the E., down the plateau, we were able to fix exactly the position of our peak, which had the appearance of a snow cone crowned by a rocky ridge. We climbed up over the E. ridge, cutting some steps in the ice above the inevitable bergschrund, and then clambering up rocks without difficulty to the summit of our peak (13,190 ft.), which we gained at

10.15 A.M. Now we saw Dr. Häberlin's rocky pinnacle, which is to the S. of our peak (about the place where on the map the S.W. ridge branches off), and at least 50 mètres (= 164 ft.) lower. From the Klein Grünhorn the difference seemed even greater. It seemed to us that the ridge from our peak to the lower point might very well be passed.

The view that was spread before us took in all the great mountains from Mont Blanc to the Ortler and Oetzthal groups. Its characteristic feature was that it was impossible to see any valley; snow and rock alone met the eye. After building a cairn, in which we left our cards, we began the descent at 11.30, first over the N.W. ridge, then over the easy snow slopes to the right. A jump over the bergschrund brought us to the great plateau, whence in a few steps we regained the Sattel at 11.50. Another ascent over snow and across a small bergschrund led us to the rocky ridge which runs up towards the Gross Viescherhorn. The rocks are firm and give good hold, so that it is possible to climb up them very quickly, and at 12.30 we had reached the summit of the Gross Viescherhorn. The view was most superb; a view such as even in the Oberland one rarely enjoys. It has been fully described by Mr. Moore.*

At 1.15 we began the descent by way of the N.W. ridge. Peter Baumann had told us that this ridge had not been done, as Messrs. Chater and Hooper with him, and Peter Kaufmann, had not reached the summit by this route,† but by some other, possibly the S.W. ridge, certainly *not* the N.W. one. The rocks were very rotten, and after circumventing (on the W.) the first tooth, we were obliged to keep mainly on the W. flank of the ridge, sometimes crossing over to the other side, sometimes on the crest itself. We crossed several ice couloirs by means of steps, and so reached the point at which the rock-ridge ends. What we saw here was not very pleasant—a long descending snow-ridge with a corniche. We had not the time to undertake such a long piece of step-cutting downwards, and the snow was in a very untoward condition, for the upper layer, warmed by the sun, slipped away at the slightest touch, and exposed to view the hard ice below. So with heavy hearts we turned back. A fortnight later we were not displeased to hear that another member of the Alpine Club had tried to ascend this ridge, but had failed because the guides were unwilling to under-

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. i. p. 243.

† See *Alpine Journal*, vol. i. p. 319.

take the task of cutting steps in the then condition of the ice. So we left the solution of this problem to someone else; and it can certainly be solved, for we proved that the rocks can be done, and the snow-ridge is by no means impassable. The rocks of the S.W. ridge are without doubt more difficult than those of the N.W. ridge, and up the former lies the usual way to the peak. We were unable to ascertain whether the Gross Viescherhorn was accessible from the Grindelwald glacier or not; but it seems to us that this climb might certainly be achieved, though it might be one of the hardest in the Bernese Alps, while the lower bit of the ascent is much exposed to great avalanches of stones and ice.

There is, however, one observation of some orographical value which we made. It is that the Gross Viescherhorn does *not* lie on the ridge which forms the boundary between Bern and the Valais (as shown on the Federal map)—that running from the Walcherhorn to the Ochsenhorn—but that the N.W. ridge meets the main ridge at the second rocky tooth on the former. Later we saw this still more clearly from the Schwarzegg hut.

At 2.45 we once more stood on the summit of the Gross Viescherhorn, and in half an hour regained the Sattel, where we rested a quarter of an hour. We were rather anxious about the state of the ice wall, and still more so when on reaching the end of the rocky rib we saw on all sides snow slipping down, streams rushing along, stones here and there whizzing by. We halted on the last rocks to put on our *crampons*. The steps cut in the morning had almost disappeared or were filled with water, and so I had to cut fresh ones. We worked our way down slowly, but better than we expected. The various crevasses were crossed with care, and finally we stood just above the great bergschrund. It was impossible to see how wide it was, for an overhanging bit which we had climbed over in the morning was in the way, and we dared not go on it now the sun had been shining on it all the day long. It would have taken a long time to cut through it, so I made a leap in the air while Lammer held the rope. Now came his turn. I wanted to advise him to slide down, meaning to pull him over by the rope when he was on the edge of the schrund; but hardly had he heard, to his joy, the word 'slide' than, without waiting for any further directions, he slid down into the crevasse and disappeared, as I had not had time to haul in the rope. A pull, the rope tightened and did its duty, my friend soon reappearing from his unpleasant quarters.

It was 5.15 P.M. We had no further adventures; but, as so often happens at the end of a hard day's work, we found it very trying to toil up the gently inclined soft and sloppy slopes of snow, and it was not till 8.45 P.M. that we re-entered the Bergli hut, overjoyed at having successfully accomplished our intended ascent.

On August 12 we found ourselves once more in the same club hut, and though a furious storm had raged throughout the night, we started on the 13th at 5.45, reaching the Mönchjoch at 6.15, and struck down the Ewig Schneefeld, keeping along the flanks of the Trugberg. Our progress was rapid, but some way on, when we turned our steps towards the middle of the snow-basin, we came on some unpleasant country, for the ice was traversed by deep parallel furrows, like the forehead of an old seer. Near the Klein Grünhorn we turned to the left, and after a reconnaissance of a quarter of an hour mounted over the not very steep snow slopes which are dominated by the Hinter Viescherhorn and the Klein Grünhorn. Séracs sometimes forced us to zigzag, and crevasses often seemed to bar the road, but there was always a way out. Once we had to cut down into a crevasse, another time we had to balance ourselves on an icy ridge between two crevasses, or again to cross an overhanging bit of snow with many icicles hanging down from it, which broke away and fell into the depths. Our icy way was by no means monotonous or easy. Out of the snow there rose two islands of rock, the side of which seemed very bad and steep, so that Lammer proposed that we should not reach the ridge, as I wished, by the upper rocks, but climb up to the upper plateau of the snow basin, and so gain the crest of the ridge by the ice wall. This almost looked as if it would be the best plan, but we resolved to try my route first of all. After cutting a dozen steps or so we reached the rocks, which turned out to be very good, so that we soon climbed them, and stood on the ridge, descending W.S.W. from the Klein Grünhorn. This ridge is not shown on the Federal map, though it is conspicuous and sharp. We began by walking up gently inclined snow slopes, where the ridge was wide, until we came to the place where it narrows and becomes a steep snow slope. Then came a long ridge of ice, gradually becoming steeper, which finally turned into a rock ridge. The snow was in good condition, and our *crampons* saved us the trouble of making steps. Steeper and steeper was the ridge, so that by means of a few steps in red snow we descended to the right on to the rocks which stretched

up to the summit. The *crampons* were now taken off, and rapid progress made. A rather sharp rock ridge, and at 11.10 A.M. we were on the highest point of the Klein Grünhorn (12,884 ft.).

I need hardly say that the view was very grand. My thermometer stood at 12·5° (Centigrade). The storm had subsided, though a certain dull shining of the sun did not look very well. The time flew rapidly by on our airy seat, where there was not very much room; indeed there was so little on the highest pinnacle that one could only stand on it by balancing oneself. After building a cairn and putting our cards in it we started down at noon. The weather became rapidly worse, clouds and mist poured through the gap of the Lötchenlücke; there was clearly no time to be lost. Just as we left the ridge the clouds came upon us, so that we could not see our way, and flakes of snow began to fall. We managed to find the steps below the rocks, and our track lower down guided us through the *séracs*. We went down pretty quickly, so as to have the *séracs* behind us before the snow had quite obliterated our footsteps. Lammer suggested that in order to avoid these *séracs* we should traverse the upper snow plateau, at the height of about 3,600 mètres, to the ridge of the Hinter Viescherhorn and descend to the Ewig Schneefeld; but we did not venture to strike out a new way in the thick clouds. Two days later we saw that this route would have been easier than the one we actually took. At 1.45, having followed our morning's track, we stood on the Ewig Schneefeld. We saw the Mönchjoch for an instant through the clouds, determined its direction by means of the compass, and then mounted towards it, unmindful of the clouds and falling snow. The way seemed as if it would never end, especially as we could see nothing, and could not therefore tell how fast we were getting on. Gradually the storm subsided and allowed the great peaks to peer above the clouds, and when we reached the Mönchjoch at 3.35 P.M., the sun came out again. We met a party here, the gentleman in which seemed to be an inexperienced walker, for he had torn his knickerbockers and hurt his thigh with his ice-axe. He clung to his axe, however, with such tenacity that it seemed as if he wished to commit suicide the next minute. After ten minutes' rest we went down to the hut and crossed its hospitable threshold at 4 P.M.

The next two days were taken up by the ascent of the Mönch from the Eigerjoch, and the descent to the Eggisch-

horn; but on August 16 we were once more at the Concordia hut, with our thoughts fixed on Kamm.

‘Kamm! Kamm! What can that be? I know no peak of that name,’ many of my readers will exclaim, even though they have made an expedition up the Great Aletsch glacier. As during the long winter evenings Lammer and I discussed, in Vienna, our plans for the summer, our attention was more and more drawn to this hitherto unclimbed peak, which is so conspicuous on the Federal map. Lammer was rather incredulous about it, for it seemed to him impossible that a peak so near the Concordia hut, where so many enterprising peak hunters have slept, could have escaped notice if it was at all a fine summit. But I felt irresistibly drawn towards this mountain, and, to Lammer’s amusement, I could not keep my thoughts from flying towards it. It was therefore only natural that the first time we crossed the Mönchjoch our looks should be turned in the direction of Kamm. Sure enough there rose up a bold rock-peak, from which jagged ridges ran W. and S.W. To the E. the peak overhangs, while to the N. the wall from the summit to the base is quite sheer. That was my idea of Kamm, and my confidence in the Federal map was completely justified. When we went over the Mönchjoch on August 15 to the Eggishorn we had time and opportunities enough of studying our peak and discussing the way up it.

The W. ridge, of which the Faulberg is an independent though a minor spur, looked very long, and on it there were many evil-looking bits; the secondary ridge, too, which runs up from the site of the old Faulberg hut to the main W. ridge, seemed long and fatiguing, while the N. wall is either inaccessible or only to be conquered after overcoming the greatest difficulties. The E. ridge is probably very hard to get at, and on that side the peak overhangs. There were, therefore, only two routes remaining—either up the ridge which by many steep steps rises from the Schönbühl glacier, and thus attack the peak from the S., or up the great rocky rib which runs up from Inner Schönbühl to the little hanging glacier under the summit. This latter route seemed to be the best, though there was one steep bit which troubled us much, and many doubtful bits besides. The map gives a good representation of the ground, but the little glacier is placed rather too high, and thus the not inconsiderable S.W. flank of the peak is totally ignored. Then, too, it does not mark the snow fields between the W. and S.W. ridges. The sharp summit between Kamm and the Schönbühlhorn, at the point

where the ridge sinks towards the Grünhornlücke, is quite accurately placed on the map, but no height is assigned to it. We could not make sure whether this bold double-toothed pinnacle was higher than, or of the same height as, Kamm; in any case such a striking and orographically important summit deserves a name and a conqueror. The height of Kamm itself is 12,697 ft.

We started at 6 A.M. only on August 17 from the Concordia hut, for we had no long tramp over glaciers before us, and we underrated our peak. As we did not care to carry much we only took with us lemonade, bread, butter, and one empty bottle to leave on the summit.

We first went down to the glacier and kept along the edge of the moraine, but as it was not easy to get through it, it was 7.15 A.M. before we reached the grassy slopes of Inner Schönbühl. Then we mounted up by grass and débris to the E. side of the rocky rib we meant to ascend by, and gained the crest without difficulty by way of a gully. More débris and grass followed, numerous traces of chamois being found all about. The ascent became steeper than before, but was so easy that we hoped that we had discovered a very accessible view point, for a glance at the map showed that it must command a very fine view. All at once the ridge narrowed and the steep bit we had seen from below revealed itself as a *gendarme* of the worst kind. First we had to crawl over several great slabs, then came a deeply cut notch, and we were at the spot where the difficulties commenced. We might perhaps have climbed down to the left over a very steep wall and then up an extremely bad crack; but it was not certain that this would go, and the rock was so rotten that we preferred to try to force the steep bit before us, as the rock was *fest* though the slope was over 80°. We traversed first to the right as far as the last flat shelf, beneath which the rocks fell steep and smooth right down to the glacier. Lammer took off his shoes, of which, as well as his knapsack and his ice-axe, I took charge. The rope was uncoiled and fastened round us. He then set about the climb, while I placed myself in as firm a position as possible, securing the rope as well. It required the nicest observations to find hand- and foothold, but at length Lammer came to a spot where he could again stand upright. He then hauled up the bags and ice-axes by means of the rope, though he could not manage to find any resting-place for them, and was obliged to press our knee against the rock so as to hold the rope while I was coming up the bad bit. When we were once more together

he clambered to the left till the crest of the ridge was regained. The great slabs of which the ridge was made up overhung at this point on the left. Luckily there was a crack into which Lammer managed to wedge his knee, then came up the bags and axes, followed by myself. Now came the very worst bit of all, such as we never came across again. The ridge not merely overhung, but its inclination varied from 70° to 80°. A little to the right there was a shallow gully. Lammer had very hard work with his hands, his feet, and his knees, and groaned aloud in consequence of his efforts. I secured myself as well as I could, but as my hold was very precarious I don't think that I could have helped being carried down if the rope had had a sudden strain put on it. At last Lammer found a cleft in the ridge in which he could squeeze his fingers. Another instant and he was astride of the ridge, his right leg dangling in the air over the overhanging rocks, his left closely pressed against the rock; there was no hold whatsoever. Once more I tied the bags and axes to the rope, and threw the package up to him. Our rope was 15 mètres (about 50 feet) long, but nearly 3 mètres of it (9½ feet) hung clear of the overhanging rocks. Lammer got hold of the things, but it was very hard for him to let the rope down to me again, for when he dangled it down it slipped away from the ridge to the right or to the left, while I in my insecure position was unable to make any great efforts to catch it. Finally it hung just above me, and I resolved to climb up without it until I could get hold of it. It was a very severe bit of work, and my muscles were strained to the utmost, as the rock was extremely difficult. After some anxious minutes, however, my hand caught the rope; and it was high time, for my shoes were of no use, as the inequalities in the gneiss were very slight, so that I had to trust myself entirely to the rope. I did not venture, however, to let myself swing with the rope to the left quite clear of the rocks, as we had done with the bags. At last I too was over this difficult bit, and also astraddle of the ridge. Now came some level bits, but on the right there was no hold for the feet, and on the left the rocks still overhung. So we had to work our way along on the right, holding on with our hands to the crest of the ridge, our feet being in the air. While we were unroping the things Lammer's axe became detached, and would have been lost but for a lucky catch with my right hand. We had next to overcome several places where the ridge overhung like a thin bent plank, till we came

to a notch and got over on to the left flank of the ridge. Some more not very easy bits followed, then matters became easier, and we gained a wide shelf on which we rested for twenty minutes. We had taken from 9 A.M. to 11.15 A.M. to get over the *gendarme*, a height of only 50 mètres (164 feet). It was one of the very hardest bits I have ever done.

The ridge now became shattered though not difficult, and we soon came to a broad crest covered with huge slabs arranged like a staircase, followed by *débris*, up which we went easily. The S.W. ridge is on the whole very broad, and is only in that one bit so marvellously sharp. Some patches of snow and tiresome stones offered an easy way to just under the little hanging glacier. We had wrongly feared that we would here meet with difficulties. There were only some nice little scrambles, and at 1.30 P.M. we were just under the very steep ice stream, halting here for twenty minutes. A rocky ledge led round this to the right, and thus we gained the glacier without difficulty. There were crevasses, and a *bergschrund*, and a steep ice slope on the glacier, so that we put on our *crampons* in order not to lose any time in step-cutting. We made for the ridge falling to the S. from the summit and had to cross the *bergschrund*, after which Lammer got on some very slippery slabs, while I kept as far as possible to the ice and then climbed up some red rocks. A shallow ice gully gave us some trouble in crossing, but after that the ascent became easier and easier along the rotten rocks of the S.W. flank till we reached the W. ridge, and in a few steps the highest point of our peak. This was the way in which once more we had conquered a haughty peak after a hard struggle.

As we had expected, the distant view did not differ much from that gained from other points in the Bernese Oberland, and besides there were higher peaks all around us; but the view over the Aletsch and Viescher glaciers, and the spectacle of the Jungfrau, Mönch, Grünhorn, Viescherhörner, Aletschhorn, and Finsteraarhorn was finer than from any other point in this district—at least, in our opinion. Kamm occupies such a central position that it enables one to grasp all the chief characteristic features of the Bernese chain.

We had again the pleasure of building a cairn and depositing our cards therein. As we had only reached the summit at 2.35 P.M., and at that time were only aware of one way down, it was very late in the day (3 P.M.) when we began the descent. Hence we went down as fast as we could, though the slippery rocks and the steep ice slopes of the

hanging glacier delayed us slightly. Then we ran down the débris, and so came nearer the dreaded bit of the ridge which had given us so much trouble on the way up. But we now found a way of climbing down to the right, and were very ready to try this or any other way than that by which we had come up; for we neither of us cared particularly about facing the difficult and even dangerous descent of the *mauvais pas*.

We had straight before us a series of rocky slabs and ledges, and gullies which compelled us to make many a zig-zag. Farther down we were forced by increasing difficulties to traverse to the right; but these difficulties were not anything compared with those on the *gendarme*, though we had several bad bits to pass. At length we reached the snow field (between the W. and S.W. ridges) which is streaked by the avalanches and stones from the Kamm glacier, and which is not marked on the map. When we looked up at the wall down which we had come it seemed impossible, for from below one cannot distinguish the small clefts in the rocks or trace out all our twistings and turnings, and the wall seems therefore quite impracticable. We slid down the snow field, turned, by zigzags to the left, a rocky precipice over which sprang a fine waterfall, and so came once more to Inner Schönbühl. As daylight vanished we entered the Concordia hut, which was occupied by twenty-four persons, and as we were the last comers we could only find room on the floor under the guides' quarters. They offered us room in their quarters, but as they deserved rest even more than we did—for they often have to drag not merely themselves but their 'Herren' up a high peak—we declined their friendly offer.

We had not therefore much chance of repose after the very severe exertions and anxieties of the day, so that next day we contented ourselves with climbing the Finsteraarhorn by the ordinary route. On the ascent we were troubled by clouds and by an icy wind which froze my lemonade, and on the descent we encountered a furious snowstorm.

Our climbing in the Oberland came to an end with the two expeditions I have just described, as the snowstorm of August 18 had covered all the great mountains with a thick white coat. The next day, as we were leaving this group, the sun shone out from the dark blue sky and allowed us a farewell glimpse of the district in all its wonderful beauty and splendour. We had spent there many pleasant hours in the purest enjoyment of the grandeur of Nature, and in satisfying our longings for a life of freedom and adventure. *Auf Wiedersehen!*