

## OVERHEAD LIFTS

*Single-Handed Presses*

Hermann has military pressed  $137\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (62.5 kilos) with the right hand and  $115\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (52.5 kilos) with the left hand. Arthur Saxon's best known military press, right hand, has been recorded at 126 lb. (57 kilos). Charles Rigoulot is said to have military pressed both right and left arm 119 lb. (54 kilos). Ronald Walker performed a right-hand military press of  $128\frac{3}{4}$  lb. ( $58\frac{1}{4}$  kilos). The giant Swoboda military pressed with the right hand no less than  $154\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (70 kilos) whilst Steinbach performed the same lift with  $148\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (67.5 kilos). The best right-hand military press of Josef Graf was  $143\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (65 kilos).

*Single-Handed Snatches*

On 21st November, 1919, in Leipzig, Hermann snatched with the left hand  $198\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (90 kilos) and with the right hand he has snatched  $229\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (104 kilos). This was on 4th September, 1926, when he had turned professional. Hermann's best lift as an amateur was  $220\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (100 kilos), lifted on 30th November, 1919, in Leipzig. The right-hand Snatch of Charles Rigoulot of  $255\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (116 kilos) is the existing world's professional record. The best known Lift of Arthur Saxon was 200 lb. (91 kilos) on the right-hand Snatch, which was performed in 1900 in Leipzig. The famous British Heavy Weight Champion, Ronald Walker, had snatched with the right hand  $200\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (just over 91 kilos). Walker snatched with the left hand  $202\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (just over 92 kilos). Hermann's single-handed snatching ability was far in excess of that possessed by Karl

## CHAPTER 5

## His Lifting Performances and Feats of Strength

I HAVE chosen to group the many wonderful feats performed during his career by Hermann Görner under headings classifying them into Single-Handed Lifts, Double-Handed Lifts and so on, rather than list them in strict chronological order. During the course of my association with Hermann, I have personally witnessed and recorded as a referee approximately 1,400 different feats of strength of all varieties and I have always had the impression that Hermann, in performing the greater majority of his many amazing feats, very rarely exerted himself to anywhere near the limits of his astounding power. In many cases, he could have exceeded the Lift he made at the time of performance by a further attempt, but this he always refused to do. Most of his established records were made with not more than two or three attempts. That he was undoubtedly one of the most accomplished all-round Strong Man and Weight Lifter the world has ever seen is my own firm conviction, and how correct or not is my judgment, I will leave to the reader, after he has carefully read the following list of some of the more outstanding of Görner's feats performed during the years I have been privileged to associate with him.

Swoboda, Josef Steinbach and Josef Graff, whose best single-handed Snatches were as follows :—

*Swoboda* : Right-hand Snatch, 179 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (81.35 kilos).  
Left-hand Snatch, 168 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (slightly more than 76 kilos).

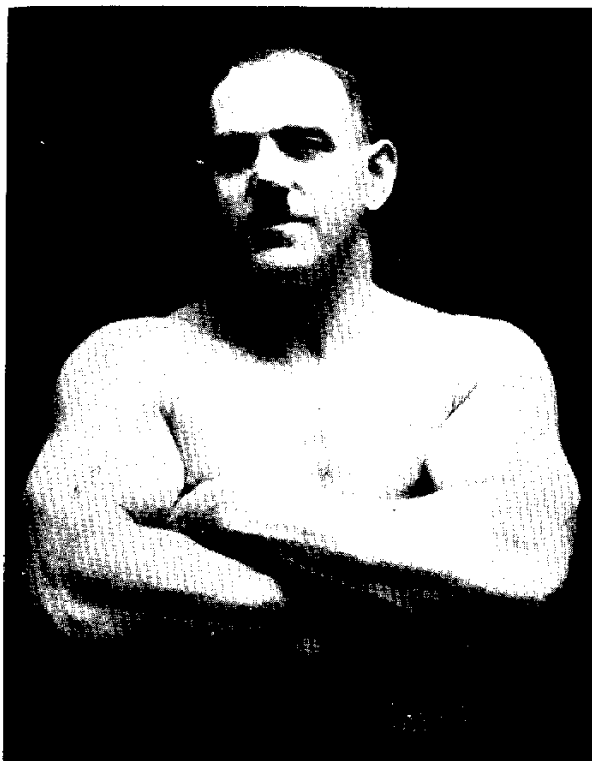
*Steinbach* : Right-hand Snatch, 189 lb. (85.7 kilos).  
Left-hand Snatch, 176 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (80 kilos).

*Graff* : Right-hand Snatch, 194 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (88.4 kilos).  
Left-hand Snatch, 180 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (82 kilos).

Whilst discussing Hermann's ability at single-handed Snatching, mention should be made of one of Görner's pet challenge stunts. This was a right-hand straight or stiff arm Snatch of 169 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (77 kilos) performed on a barbell with a shaft of 2 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. in diameter. Due to Hermann's tremendous gripping power, this feat was rendered impossible to others, whilst to him it was quite a simple affair.

#### *Single-handed Jerks*

On 9th November, 1919, in Leipzig, Hermann lifted 264 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (120 kilos) in a Right-hand Clean and Jerk with Barbell. This Lift should be compared with that of the famous Russian, Georg Lurich, who, lifting in Prague, put up 266 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (121 kilos), but in Lurich's Lift the Bar was taken to the shoulders with two hands, whereas in Hermann's case it was lifted with the right hand only. The present World Amateur Heavy Weight Record is held by Brunstedt of Sweden, who lifted 259 lb. on 2nd December, 1948. On 21st September, 1913, in Kassel, Hermann actually cleaned and jerked with the right hand a Barbell weighing no



Hermann Görner in the well known "folded arms" pose. Note tremendous forearm development.

less than 286½ lb. (130 kilos). The bar was jerked to arms length, but owing to faulty balance it was not 'fixed'.

For comparison with other famous Lifters, may be mentioned the best recorded Lift of Arthur Saxon, 229¼ lb. (104 kilos); that of Karl Swoboda of Austria with 231¼ lb. (105 kilos), but in this case he lifted with two hands to the shoulder; Josef Steinbach, also of Austria, lifted 233¾ lb. (106 kilos) whilst Karl Mörke lifted 248 lb. (112½ kilos), but, once again, using two hands to the shoulder.

On the Left-hand Clean and Jerk, Hermann has lifted 220½ lb. (100 kilos) against the best known Lift of Charles Rigoulot, the famous French Lifter, of 198½ lb. (90 kilos). Karl Swoboda, Josef Steinbach, Josef Grafl, also lifted the same weight, namely 198½ lb. It should be noted, however, that, in the case of Swoboda and Grafl, they each used two hands in taking the barbell to the shoulder, only Steinbach lifting it 'clean'.

#### DOUBLE-HANDED JERKS AND 'ANYHOW' LIFTS

At Dresden on 25th July, 1920, Görner lifted the enormous weight of 430 lb. (a little more than 195 kilos) overhead in the Two Hands 'Anyhow' style, performing the feats with four kettleweights in the following manner. He first of all swung with the right hand two kettleweights, one weighing 110¼ lb. and the other 99¼ lb. Still holding the bells overhead, he then bent down and picked up with the left hand a third kettleweight weighing 110¼ lb. (50 kilos), which he then swung to arms length and transferred to the thumb of the right hand. Then, still holding the three kettleweights

overhead in his right hand, he lowered his body carefully and with the left hand picked up the fourth kettleweight, which he slowly swung to arms length. The combined weight then held overhead for the referee's count was, as has been stated, no less than 430 English lb. or more than 195 kilos. This was a truly stupendous feat of strength. The French giant, Apollon, was stated to have swung 4 kettleweights, grasped together, with his right arm, but these weights totalled only 176 lb. or exactly 80 kilos, whereas Hermann swung with his right hand, at the commencement of the feat, two kettleweights totalling 209½ lb. (95 kilos)! Hermann then followed this colossal right-arm swing by swinging to arms length the two additional bells each weighing 50 kilos or 110¼ English lb., as has been described. For comparison with this amazing feat of Hermann's may be mentioned the great Arthur Saxon's lift of 445¼ lb. (202 kilos), which was performed, however, with a Barbell and a single Kettlebell. The Barbell weighed 335 lb. and the Kettlebell 110¼ lb., the lift being performed in Leipzig on 3rd November, 1905. So far as is known, that is the only recorded 'Anyhow' Lift to exceed Hermann's Lift with four Kettlebells. However, even famous Arthur Saxon, when lifting Kettleweights in the 'Anyhow' style could not exceed 300 lbs. which consisted of two Kettleweights of 150 lb. each. No man in the world has ever lifted more weight in the shape of Kettleweights in the 'Anyhow' style than Hermann Görner.

In the Two Hands Jerk with Barbell, Hermann has performed some stupendous Lifts, among the best of these being the following:—

411 lb. lifted at Oldham, England, on 23rd January, 1928, when he jerked from behind the neck a Barbell with a man sitting on each end, the total weight being as stated, 411 lbs. The Bar was jerked to arms length and still holding it overhead, Hermann revolved his body three times in succession, afterwards lowering the weight to the floor.

On 11th July, 1920, in Dresden, Hermann lifted in the Two Hands Clean and Jerk with Barbell 390¼ English lb. (177 kilos). It should be stressed that both in the 'Clean' and 'Jerk' very little splitting or squatting was resorted to. In all Lifts of this type, Hermann merely gave a very slight dip, when receiving weight in the shoulders and again when jerking overhead.

For comparison with Hermann's Lift, the best recorded Two Hands Clean and Jerk of other famous Strong Men are as follows :—

Arthur Saxon—311 lb. This weight was jerked twice, once from the chest and once from behind the neck.

The great Ronald Walker of Wakefield, former British Heavy Weight Amateur Champion, lifted 363¾ lb. (165 kilos) in this style. (Unofficially 374 lb.)

The world-famous Egyptian amateur, El Saied Nosseir, lifted 368¼ lb.

Arnold Luhaäär of Estonia lifted 369¼ lb. (167½ kilos).

Steve Stanko of U.S.A. lifted officially 382 lb.

Jakof Kutsenko of the U.S.S.R. in 1947 lifted 383½ lb.

The world professional record is held by



Hermann Görner at age 43. Weight 290 lb. Taken in Leipzig in 1934 by Elsie Görner.

Charles Rigoulot of France who, lifting on a specially-constructed Barbell, Cleaned and Jerked the stupendous poundage of  $402\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (182.5 kilos). This feat was performed on 1st February, 1929, in Paris. It is said that Rigoulot had nine successive failures before he was successful in lifting the weight on his tenth attempt.

It is interesting to note that so far back as 1920 Hermann Görner had lifted the colossal poundage of  $390\frac{1}{4}$  lb., which compares with the World Amateur Heavy Weight Record, performed 28 years later, when the American John Davis, lifting in London at the 1948 Olympic Games, accomplished a Two Hands Clean and Jerk of  $391\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (Increased to  $393\frac{1}{4}$  lb. by Davis himself in October, 1950, lifting in Germany after the 1950 World's Championships in Paris.) The former German Amateur Heavyweight Champion, Josef Manger, jerked from the shoulders a barbell of  $401\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (182 kilos) in New York City on 25th June, 1938, on the occasion of the German Weightlifting Teams' visit to America.

The following feats will show the tremendous power possessed by Görner in Double-handed Overhead Lifting. On 7th February, 1914, he lifted in a Two Hands Clean and Jerk 335 lb. (152 kilos) consisting of a Kettleweight weighing 169 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. in the right hand and a Dumbbell weighing 165 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. in the left hand.

Hermann also made the following Lift with his heels together throughout and at no time during the Lift did his feet move from the original position of 'attention'. On 5th May, 1932, at Leipzig he cleaned and jerked a Barbell weighing 341 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb.

(155 kilos). The bar was actually cleaned to the height of the mouth, lowered to his shoulders and without moving his feet from the original 'heels together' position the weight jerked overhead mostly by sheer arm and shoulder strength. He has also cleaned a Barbell weighing 330 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (150 kilos) to the shoulders and jerked overhead, then lowered the Bar to the 'hang' position, cleaned it again and jerked a second time overhead. Throughout this feat his feet remained together.

On 1st February, 1927, lifting in Leipzig on his Barbell with a shaft 2 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. in diameter, he lifted in the two hands Clean and Jerk 330 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. During the whole lift his feet remained stationary, a very vivid demonstration of his enormous gripping power.

#### DOUBLE-HANDED SNATCHES

Lifting at Kalk Bay, South Africa, on 4th September, 1926, Hermann snatched with two hands 297 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. This Lift of Hermann's may be compared with the late Ronald Walker's Lift of the same poundage, namely 297 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb., although Walker is said to have unofficially snatched the tremendous weight of 320 lb. (145 kilos). The great American champion, Steve Stanko, lifted 310 lb. (140.5 kilos) when winning the Heavyweight Championship in 1941. Louis Abele, also of America, is reported to have snatched 310 lb. John Davis of U.S.A., the present World's Heavy Weight Amateur Champion holds the World's Heavyweight Record with a Lift of 327 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb., performed in New York on 27th January, 1950. The World's Professional Record of 315 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. was established by Charles Rigoulot in 1930. In snatching, Hermann relied almost

entirely on his colossal arm and shoulder strength— if he had trained to use his legs in modern style, there is no knowing what heights he might have attained. A Lift of 330 lb. would appear to have been easily possible.

A Lift which never failed to impress his audience was his performance of the Two Hands Snatch with crossed arms. When lifting in this style, Hermann gripped the Bar in the centre with his hands touching, the left arm overlapping the right. In Leipzig on 5th December, 1919, lifting in this fashion, he snatched a Barbell weighing  $231\frac{1}{2}$  lb.— an amazing feat of strength. He has also snatched 248 lb. whilst his feet remained in the "heels together" position throughout. This is a real 'power plus' feat!

To demonstrate his tremendous finger and gripping strength, it may be mentioned that Hermann snatched with two hands a Barbell weighing  $165\frac{1}{4}$  lb. accomplished by merely grasping the discs at each end of the Bar. This feat was accomplished at the first attempt and was performed in Leipzig on 20th October, 1931.

#### *Single and Double-handed Swings*

In a feat of swinging weights overhead with one or two arms, Hermann was in a class by himself. The most outstanding of his many feats performed with kettleweights included the following :—

Right-hand Swing with two kettleweights— total weight,  $187\frac{1}{2}$  lb. Performed with straight arm on 5th April, 1931, in Leipzig.

Right-hand Swing with kettleweight weighing  $110\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (50 kilos), swung no less than 48 times



Hermann and Elsie Görner in stage costume with the famous "Challenge" barbell of 330 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. in the background.

in succession. Performed on 14th July, 1912, in Leipzig.

Right-hand Swing with kettleweight weighing  $132\frac{1}{4}$  lb., using only the forefinger of his right hand. Performed on 8th May, 1934, in Leipzig.

Right-hand Swing with kettlebell of  $110\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (50 kilos,) using only the little finger, also performed on 8th May, 1934.

Right-hand Swing with two kettleweights (each  $110\frac{1}{4}$  lb.), total weight  $220\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (100 kilos). Performed on 21st March, 1920, at Leipzig. (Unofficially.)

Left-hand Swing with two kettleweights—total weight 193 lb. ( $87\frac{1}{2}$  kilos). Performed on 21st September, 1919, at Leipzig.

Right-hand Swing with two kettleweights  $211\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (96 kilos). Officially performed at Leipzig on 12th October, 1919. Lifting in the same fashion Arthur Saxon performed a lift of  $188\frac{1}{2}$  lb. ( $85\frac{1}{2}$  kilos) at his best.

Right-hand Swing with *three* kettleweights of equal size and shape totalling  $166\frac{1}{2}$  lb. ( $75\frac{1}{2}$  kilos). Performed 5th August, 1934, at Leipzig. Arthur Saxon, who possessed a larger size hand than Görner, lifted in this style three kettleweights weighing  $165\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (75 kilos).

Right-hand Swing with dumb-bell weighing 150 lb. (68 kilos) *whilst sitting on a chair*, remaining seated throughout and without moving the feet. Performed at Leipzig on 4th April, 1933.

Two-hands Swing with *four* kettleweights—two in each hand—weighing  $221\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (100.5 kilos) without moving the feet. The kettleweights were swung from between Görner's legs

to arms length overhead. At Leipzig on 5th August, 1934.

Two-hands Repetition Swing with two kettleweights totalling  $220\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (100 kilos). Swung four times in succession! Performed 20th April, 1924.

Two Dumb-bells Swing. Whilst sitting on a chair Görner swung two dumb-bells weighing  $200\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (91 kilos) to arms length by sheer arm and shoulder strength—without raising his body from the seat or moving his feet. This amazing feat was performed on 7th March, 1933, in Leipzig.

In double-handed swinging, the following are among the outstanding feats performed by Hermann Görner in this style of lifting:—

On 26th March, 1931, lifting again in Leipzig, he swung with two kettleweights a total of  $254\frac{3}{4}$  lb. This colossal feat was achieved at the first attempt and kettleweights lifted were the heaviest ones available in the Club. On this occasion, Hermann was in outstanding form and it is a matter of regret that no heavier weights were available for him to have further increased his record on this particular lift. For comparison with this feat, the lift of Arthur Saxon of  $220\frac{1}{2}$  lb., consisting of two 50-kilo kettleweights, should be mentioned. Saxon's feat was also performed in Leipzig.

Lifting with dumb-bells, Hermann has established a record of  $233\frac{3}{4}$  lb. The British Heavyweight Amateur Record of this lift stands at 225 lb., lifted by Ronald Walker of Wakefield.

Although the following feats are not swings in the accepted sense of the word, they are included

because the action resembles the swing in part. These feats were all performed with kettleweights of 50 kilos or 110 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. each.

Two kettleweights swung from the ground, thrown in the air and allowed to spin before being caught again by the handles, total weight 220 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

Kettleweight of 50 kilos thrown and spun with the right hand, the bell turning *three* times on its own axis before being caught with the right hand. This feat was also performed with the left hand.

Kettleweight of 77 $\frac{1}{2}$  kilos (171 lb.) thrown and spun and caught with the right hand. As far as is known this is believed to be the heaviest kettlebell ever juggled by any strong man in the world!

Kettleweight of 110 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (50 kilos) held in the right hand and without moving the feet thrown in shot-putting style a distance of 12 ft. 1 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

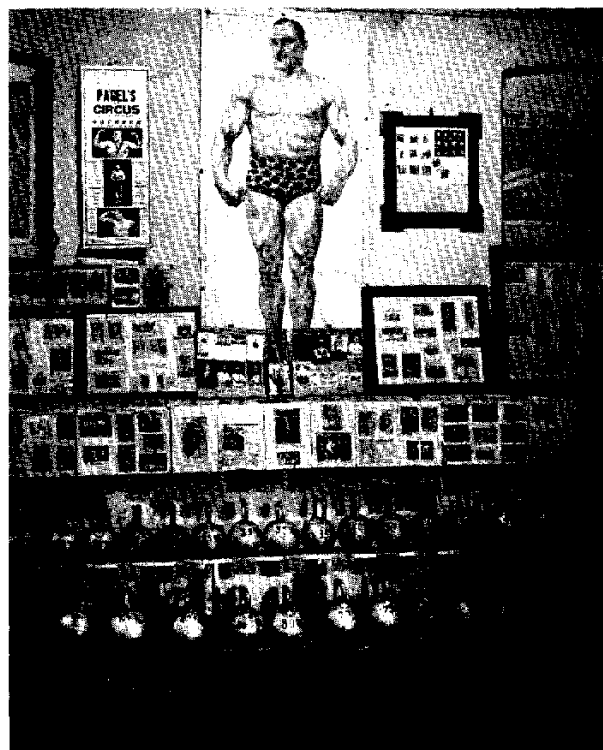
All the above feats were performed in the months of July and August, 1934, in Leipzig.

#### FEATS OF ARM AND SHOULDER STRENGTH

The following list of feats will reveal the terrific arm and shoulder strength possessed by Hermann. He is without a doubt one of the strongest armed men of all time, as a careful reading of the following feats performed by him at various times during his career will reveal.

##### *Two-hands Hold Out with barbell*

Performed on 24th March, 1933, with a barbell weighing no less than 121 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. Lifted with straight arms from "hang" in front of body to "hold out" position and then continued to arms length overhead.



A corner of Edgar Müller's Gymnasium in Leipzig—showing part of his collection of kettleweights and photographic collection, including posters of Hermann Görner's Circus act.



*Two-hands Slow Curl sitting on floor*

This feat was performed with a barbell of 209 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (95 kilos). This Lift was performed in the following manner. Hermann sat on the floor with the barbell at right angles to his thighs. From this position the weight was curled correctly to the shoulders and then pressed overhead with under-grip, with the palms of the hands facing towards the body. This feat was performed in Leipzig on 24th November, 1936.

*Two-hands Press with two kettleweights whilst seated*

In this feat Hermann sat on a chair before a table on which stood two kettleweights weighing 50 kilos (110 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb.) or a total of 220 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. The kettleweights were encircled by his hands, the thumb being placed around the kettleweight handle with the backs of the hands uppermost, the palm of the hand being in contact with the bell. From this position the arms were rotated in a half-circle, so that now the backs of his hands were touching the table top, each kettleweight being balanced in Hermann's palms. From here the bells were pulled into the shoulders and slowly pressed overhead in military style; an amazing feat of pure arm strength. Performed on 10th July, 1932, in Leipzig.

*Right-hand Curl with barbell of 330 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb.*

This stupendous feat was performed in the following manner. The barbell loaded to 330 $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (150 kilos) was supported by two chairs. The bar being then 25 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. from the ground. Hermann stood parallel to the bar, gripped it in the centre with his right hand and encircled his right wrist

with his left hand, then with one enormous effort he 'curled' the bar into his right shoulder, standing erect at the finish of the lift. It must be stressed that this was not in any way a fast single-handed pull in, as the reader might well suppose.

*Two-hands Curl with barbell*

On 4th November, 1932, in Leipzig, Hermann curled with two hands a barbell weighing 242 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (110 kilos). The bar was curled from the 'hang' without any body swing, using sheer arm power, but with a slight back bend.

Other feats of curling performed by Hermann are Two Hands Slow Curl with kettleweights, performed in correct English style with 220 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb., consisting of 110 $\frac{1}{4}$  kettlebell in each hand. He has also performed a correct Two Hands Slow Curl with barbell with the same weight, namely 220 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. This latter lift, as far as is known, is the highest poundage ever lifted correctly in the Two Hands Slow Curl. It was performed in Leipzig on 1st September, 1932. A point that should be borne in mind by the reader is the fact that Hermann sustained a serious wound in the left forearm during the first World War, which, of course, makes his feats of arm strength all the more meritorious.

*Two-hands Hold Out from below*

110 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. (50 kilos). Held out correctly for three seconds. Performed 14th August, 1932, in Leipzig.

Other curling feats include the following :—

A barbell of 226 lb. curled from off a table upon which was placed the barbell. Blocks 2 in.