

this overhead and then a third man has performed a hand-stand on the centre of the bar. The total weight thus supported overhead by Hermann being $449\frac{3}{4}$ lb. This feat was performed on 25th January, 1920, in Leipzig.

Hermann has lifted a beer barrel of 200 litres which weighed no less than $595\frac{3}{4}$ lb. This he has lifted from the floor and placed on one end upon a table, thus winning a wager. Performed 9th July, 1910.

He has performed a Deep Knee Bend with $474\frac{1}{4}$ lb. The barbell being held in front of the body at the shoulders. This was performed in Leipzig on 11th May, 1920. Hermann was not fond of deep knee bending and hardly ever practised this lift. With his enormous bodily power it can be reasonably assumed that had he put in some time training on the Deep Knee Bend, he would have been capable of a poundage approaching 600. With all his feats performed after World War I, it must be remembered that he still had many shrapnel fragments embedded in his legs. If one examines closely the photograph on page 51, a dark spot can be seen just above his left knee. This was a piece of shrapnel which later worked through the skin and was removed by Hermann himself!

CHAPTER 6

His Training Methods

THIS chapter describes for the first time the training methods of Hermann Görner which he used so successfully in developing his enormous all-round bodily strength. It is believed that a careful study of his methods as related in this chapter will not only prove of great interest to readers but will also provide the seeker after strength (with a capital "S"!) with a method which he may use to his personal advantage—modified of course to suit the individual requirements of the serious Strength student.

As one would expect from the recital of his many different feats of strength, the training of Görner was of an all-round and varied nature and covered feats and exercises with weights in every conceivable manner. For convenience, I have decided to split up this chapter into sections each dealing with a phase of training, and in these sections I will endeavour to deal as thoroughly as possible with Hermann's methods—which, I might add, were also the methods I myself laid down in my own Gymnasium in Leipzig.

NUMBER OF TRAINING SESSIONS AND DURATION

The number of training sessions per week varied during Görner's career. Between the years 1905 to 1913 he trained usually five times per week, with two days of complete rest. These five sessions included two in the open air (during the summer

months) when he trained on the Sporting Beach of the Germania Bath in Leipzig. This was a large open-air swimming pool with a beach adjoining which was supplied with a very full and varied assortment of training apparatus—barbells, dumb-bells, kettleweights, parallel bars, horizontal bars and other equipment. During this same period (1905 to 1913) there were also periods when Hermann trained daily. After the end of World War I, from 1919 to 1921, Görner trained on an average four times per week, which included one or two weekly open-air training sessions at the Germania Bath.

During Hermann Görner's professional career—from 1921 onwards—he practised daily with the weights. After the age of 40, when not professionally engaged, he trained three times weekly—for the book, it may be recorded that his training days were usually Tuesdays and Fridays in the evening and on Sunday mornings.

Each training session averaged two hours when performed in the Club, and when training in the open air it would vary between three and four hours—sometimes even longer. It may be a matter of interest to note that when training in the open air at the Germania Bath, Hermann would sometimes conclude his training by having a swim, and at other times he would take a swim first and then carry out his training with the weights. He would not dry himself after bathing but permit his body to dry by the action of sun and air upon it. In this respect, it is interesting to record that the great George Hackenschmidt also used the same method in his training. This mixing of swimming and weight-lifting may seem somewhat unusual to many readers, as I have often read that training with weights does



Görner training in the open air in South Africa—Herr Görner is seated on the barbell, which weighs 330 lbs.

not mix well with swimming—in Hermann's case it certainly did! Some of his swims would be short—of ten or so minutes duration—and at other times he would be in the water for an hour or more. He trained always as the mood took him—varying his programme to suit his energy and condition of the moment and never did he force himself to perform any workout when not feeling just in the mood. Incidentally, in passing, it may be mentioned that the famous Arthur Saxon also trained many times in the open air at the Germania Bath.

A TYPICAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

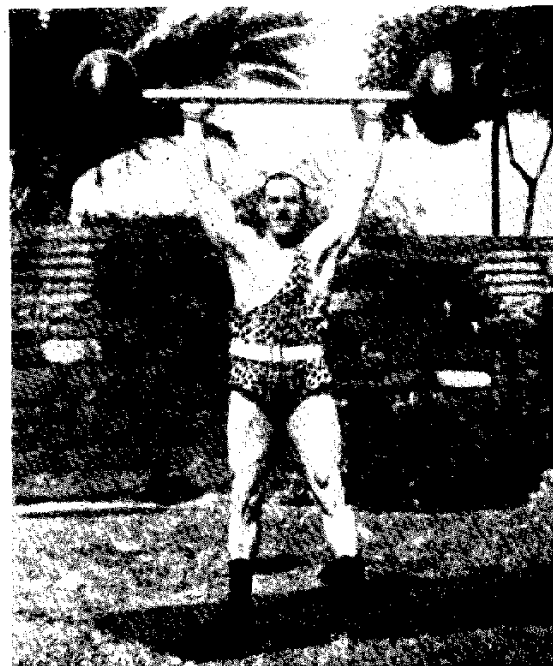
In giving details of a typical training programme of Hermann Görner's, may I preface this with the comment that this is an extremely difficult thing to do, for the simple reason that he did not have or follow what might be really termed a "set" training programme—he always varied his workouts and mixed his work so much that one could truthfully say that he never worked through exactly the same programme twice. He did, of course, use a planned and progressive programme but he did not, as many do, map out a certain number of lifts with a certain poundage and then perform them a set number of times for a given period. Each training session of Hermann's contained a mixed programme of kettlebell, dumb-bell and barbell lifting. Sometimes a workout would also include supporting feats. For instance, when Hermann trained three times per week, he might in the first training session give preference to kettlebell exercises, but he would also include barbell and dumb-bell lifts too. The second session might see the emphasis placed on dumb-bell

training with not so much on kettlebell and barbell work, and the third workout would have the emphasis placed on barbell work with just a little kettlebell and dumb-bell work included in the session. During his open-air training periods at the Germania Bath, his workouts would also include putting the shot, weight-throwing, jumping and swimming in addition to working out with the weights. It would be fair to say that kettleweight training played a very large part in Görner's workouts.

As I have already said, it would be quite impossible to lay down a certain set of lifts and say, "These lifts were practised by Görner with such-and-such weights, so many repetitions, for so many weeks." He simply did not train that way. His inventive mind was always scheming out new and different ways of lifting all kinds of weights—kettlebells, dumb-bells, barbells, block weights, barrels, loaded sacks, etc. It is no wonder that Hermann forgot what his personal records were at any one of the many hundreds of feats he had performed with weights. Whenever he wished to surpass a particular feat of his, he would ask me at each training session: "Edgar, what was my best feat at such-and-such a lift?" I would refer to my Record Book and Hermann would be informed how much he had lifted on that particular occasion and on that particular lift. Usually, after this prompting, Hermann would recall the lift and when he made it—he would then proceed to better that particular feat, but he would never try his limit. He was always most "economical" with his enormous strength and, due to this, very many of his lifts were nowhere near his maximum ability—for instance, his feats of Supine Pressing, to quote just one example.

It need hardly be stressed that Görner was Leipzig's greatest attraction in "Iron Game" circles and very many officials, lifters and strength-followers from other Leipzig clubs visited our Club at nearly every training session for witnessing Görner working out and for observing at first hand every movement of this living "Muscle Mountain". It is no wonder that Leipzig and other Weightlifting Clubs engaged Görner for their Exhibition Shows, knowing full well that 3000 to 4000 spectators would show up to see Görner in the flesh. As a matter of passing interest, it may be mentioned that Leipzig alone had 34 weightlifting Clubs throughout the city.

Now to try to describe an average workout of Görner's which he would do in the Leipzig Club in an evening—a workout lasting about two hours. He would usually start by working out through what in Germany we call "Die Kette"—The Chain—but this is no ordinary chain. Let me try and describe it for you. Down one side of the gymnasium is a row of kettleweights—a total of nineteen—the first one weighing 13 kilos (about 28.5 lb.) and the last one 52.5 kilos (about 115.75 lb.). The whole row of kettlebells were paired off, except the last and heaviest one, giving a gradual increase of approximately 5 to 10 lb. per pair. The final pair of kettleweights weighing 220.5 lb. (100 kilos) together. The kettleweights were placed in a row on the floor of the gymnasium, and working "Die Kette" (or The Chain) meant that Hermann would start out by taking the first kettleweight in the right hand and swinging it to arm's length overhead, after swinging it, the weight would be lowered to the shoulder and then pressed up again overhead, re-lowered to the shoulder and from there to the



Hermann Görner lifting his famous stage "Challenge" Barbell with shaft of 2½ in. diameter and weighing 330½ lb. (150 kilos). Photograph taken in Cape Town, South Africa in 1923.

"hang" and then curled to the shoulder, then pressed overhead again and finally lowered again and replaced on the floor. He would then repeat this with the next kettleweight, using this time the left hand. The whole length of The Chain would be worked through in this manner—in Hermann's case he would lift all the bells in this fashion with the exception that he did not curl the last and final kettleweight of 115.74 lb.—but he could curl both the 110.25 (50 kilos) kettleweights! Other members of the Club would work through The Chain as far as possible—stopping only when limited by their strength.

At other times, Hermann would work through The Chain and vary the method of working out—for instance, he might perform only Swings with each arm—he might do Swings with both arms, taking a pair of the kettleweights at the same time—he might Swing a pair of the bells singlehanded grasping them both in one hand—he might Swing the weights held on the palm of the hand—Swing them from between the legs or outside the legs—again he might work through doing the Two Hands Anyhow, sometimes Swinging each weight, sometimes Pressing each weight overhead. This working through The Chain might take up the first forty minutes of his work-out. At times, he would practise also Cleaning and Swinging on *one* leg, with either hand in turn, starting with the right leg when working with the right arm and vice versa with his left arm. Throughout the Clean or the Swing, he would be balanced entirely on one leg until the bell was replaced on the floor.

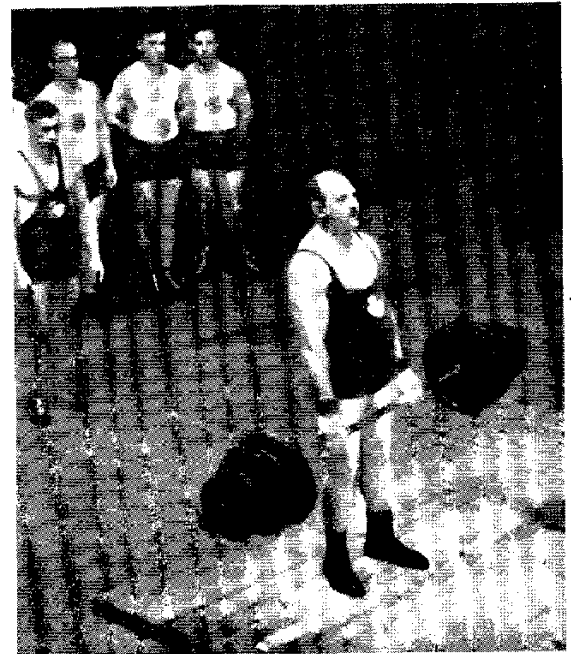
The second forty minutes might then be taken up by working out in similar fashion with dumb-bells,

and the final forty minutes would be occupied with a work-out on the barbell—commencing sometimes with the empty shaft weighing 55 lb. ("Berg" pattern). Starting with a One-hand Snatch and going on to One-Hand Cleaning and Pressing. He would work up with the weight increasing on the bar to a point when he would switch to Two-hands Snatching and then on to Cleaning and Jerking. Usually, the bar would finish with the top men of the Club Jerking 308 lb., and, after all were through for the night, Hermann would go on and have the bar made up to 319.5, 330.5, 352.5 lb., which he would proceed to Clean and Jerk—sometimes with ordinary grip, sometimes with reverse grip. He would do his Two-Hands Snatching and Jerking occasionally with the feet remaining together throughout the lift—giving only slightly at the knees. In this manner he would work up to 330.5 lb. on the Jerk. A further training feat of Hermann's was to Clean and Jerk the barbell of 330.5 lb. overhead and then hold it there whilst he took away one leg to the side—he would swing this out to the side and then back, immediately transferring the weight over to that leg and swinging out to the side the opposite leg. Starting with a slow tempo, he would speed it up until he was almost hopping on alternate legs swinging the opposing leg to the side—with the barbell held overhead throughout! At other times Hermann would hold the weight overhead and then unlock his arms and lower the weight a few inches, immediately pressing it out and relocking his arms—repeating this movement for several repetitions. He would also practise Cleaning a weight for five to six repetitions and then Jerk it overhead after the sixth Clean. In this manner, he

would work up from 275.5 lb. to 286.5 lb. Then take 308.5 lb. for three "Cleans" and one final Jerk. Two "Cleans" with 330.5 lb. and one Jerk. Sometimes he would round out this session by performing Upright Rowing Motions of two to three repetitions with the barbell, ranging from 220.5 lb. 242.5 lb. and 253.5 lb.

Thus might end a typical work-out covering two hours—working fast all the while and not pausing to "natter" during his training session. Hermann did his talking and discussing after his work-out was over for the day.

On other evening training sessions he might, after working through The Chain, perform some Curls, Presses and Holdouts with both one and two hands, whilst sitting on the floor. These lifts might be performed with kettlebells, dumb-bells or barbell as the mood took him. In all these lifts he usually performed two repetitions—never more than three—then increased the weight. Sitting on a chair, Hermann would do Swings and Presses, Holdouts and Crucifix and also Curls, from the same position. On other occasions, he might do his regular barbell work-out with different grips, gripping with the hands close together, wide apart, crossed grip, reversed grip and so on. Or he would sit astride a bench and Clean a barbell off the bench, then whilst in this position he would Press or Push the barbell overhead. A further variation would be to kneel down on the floor and Clean the bar to the shoulders from this position. There were, to be exact, two positions on the knees—one kneeling upright on the knees and the second kneeling and letting the buttocks rest on the heels—both positions were used in training by Hermann.



Hermann Görner demonstrating a four-finger Dead Lift of 595½ lb. (270 kilos), using only the index and middle fingers of each hand. Performed on 30th November, 1933, at Leipzig.

In the Görner Club at Leipzig there were usually three barbells and lifting platforms in constant use. No. 1 was for the beginners, the barbell usually being between 100 to 150 lb. in weight. No. 2 was for the experienced lifters, the barbell here being mostly 150 to 200 lb., whilst No. 3 platform was where the heavy Dead Lifts and Deep Knee Bends were performed with a barbell usually loaded to 300- or 400 to 500 lb. Depending on his energy on any given training evening, Hermann would start at any one of these platforms with whatever weight happened to be on the bar at that moment. At other times, as I have said, he would commence with the shaft of the bar only.

TRAINING FOR SPECIAL FEATS

(i) THE DEAD LIFTS—TRAINING FOR ONE-HAND DEAD LIFTING

For creating a record or attempting to break a record in One- or Two-Handed Dead Lifts, Görner usually trained for two to three weeks before the attempt, getting in either six or nine training sessions—occasionally more, sometimes less. Hermann did not like repetitions in Dead Lifting, but would practise the lift in some variations, increasing the weight by 10 or 15 kilos (22 and 33 lb.). Very rarely would he increase his further attempts by 20 kilos (44 lb.). When using low poundages (for him) in the One- and Two-hands Dead Lifts, Görner would sometimes lower the bar from the

finishing position back down to the floor, and, *without touching the floor*, he would again lift the bar back into the finishing position. When practising the One-hand Dead Lifts with low poundages, Görner would sometimes keep his disengaged arm held out at shoulder-level sideways throughout the lift, instead of gaining support from it by placing the non-lifting arm on the corresponding leg and pressing downwards, as is more usual in this lift. Naturally, when making his Record attempts he used the disengaged hand in this fashion. Hermann practised all his Dead Lifts on straight bars with regular plates, using mostly the Berg-type and sometimes the Schwedler-type revolving barbell. At no time was the bar higher from the floor than 8.25 inches (21 cms.). I list hereunder his method of training for One-hand Dead Lifts and will describe in detail the various grips he used for strengthening his fingers and grip.

For One-hand Dead Lifts with the barbell parallel with the lifter's front, the following variation of grip would be used equally over two training sessions, making usually three lifts with each grip—very rarely would he perform four attempts.

Grip No. 1

One-hand Dead Lift using thumbless overhand grip with four fingers only. In this style, Hermann would lift the bar by gripping it in the *first* joint of his fingers—the hand was *not* closed so that the ends of the fingers touched the palm. In other words, the fingers were at full stretch except the first joint which encircled the barbell shaft—the thumb was kept quite clear of the bar throughout. In this style

he would do 220·5 lb., 253·5 lb., 275·5 lb., and has lifted 330·75 lb. as a maximum.

Grip No. 2

One-hand Dead Lift using thumbless overhand grip—the more usual style of thumbless grip. The fingers were wrapped round the shaft of the barbell and touched his palm, as the whole of the hand was closed—the thumb placed on the shaft the same side as the fingers. For lifting in this manner, he took the following poundages :—330·75 lb., 363·75 lb., and 385·75 lb. As a maximum, he has lifted 463 lb.

Grip No. 3

One-hand Dead Lift using normal overhand grip—the usual grip with the thumb going round the shaft in the opposite direction to the fingers. Using 3 attempts again, he lifted the following poundages :—463, 485, 507 lb. As a maximum, he has lifted in this manner 554·48 lb., also on a non-revolving Domke straight bar.

Grip No. 4

One-hand Dead Lift with Bent Arm with overhand hook grip. In this fashion, the lifting arm was half-bent at the elbow and *kept in this position* throughout the lift. The grip used was the normal overhand grip *with hook* and the bar lifted from floor to waist-level. In this style Hermann would do—again one attempt with each poundage—242·5, 264·5 and 286·5 lb. He has lifted 330·75 lb. in this style.



The famous "Plank" feat as performed by Goerner. He is here shown supporting over 2,500 lb. Photograph taken in South Africa whilst touring with Page's Circus.