

IN THE SECOND DECADE OF THE SIXTEENTH century the Alps for the first time were described and depicted as a playground, an ideal one for the nobles who hunted the chamois. During the next twenty years the natural philosophers who gave such lustre to Swiss science discovered that enquiring and appreciative minds were stimulated by traveling through mountain forests and meadows, by climbing toward the lofty peaks. This novel idea, evidence of a revolution in human thought, found its most vigorous statement in two essays by Conrad Gesner.

This period must be considered the false dawn of modern mountaineering. It was separated by nearly two hundred years from the great awakening which began in the eighteenth century in the western Alps, when the cult of the climber, presaged by Albrecht von Haller and Jean Jacques Rousseau, was firmly founded by Paccard and Saussure, amateur mountaineers. Within two generations their disciples were found all over the world.

Von Haller, the famous Bernese physician and physiologist, was familiar with Gesner's writings before making his own climbs and writing his poem, *Die Alpen*, in 1730. Paccard and Saussure also may have known that annual mountain trips had been instituted and celebrated by Gesner and his friends two centuries earlier. Although these conquerors of Mont Blanc entered a new world of ice and storm, their enthusiasm and enjoyment of the mountains never found an expression so eloquent as in the Latin pages of the Zürich philosopher.

In the translation of those pages and the reproduction of the earliest Alpine plates we hope to awaken even after four centuries something of the wonder of the days when Conrad Gesner botanized, when Emperor Maximilian hunted the chamois, and both, climbing in the mountains for study and for sport, found recreation and intense delight.

W. Dock



[nicht verleiher]

# CONRAD GESNER

On the Admiration of Mountains, the prefatory letter addressed to Jacob Avienus, Physician, in Gesner's pamphlet "On Milk and Substances prepared from Milk," first printed at Zürich in 1543.

A Description of the Riven Mountain, commonly called Mount Pilatus, addressed to J. Chrysostome Huber, originally printed with another work of Gesner's at Zürich in 1555.

Translated by H. B. D. Soulé.

### TOGETHER WITH:

On Conrad Gesner and The Mountaineering of Theuerdank,  
by J. Monroe Thorington. Bibliographical Notes by  
W. Dock and J. Monroe Thorington.

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A LETTER TO JACOB AVIENUS  
ON THE ADMIRATION OF MOUNTAINS  
FROM THE HAND OF  
CONRAD GESNER, PHYSICIAN.



# CONRAD GESNER,

PHYSICIAN, SENDS HEARTIEST GREETINGS

to the most distinguished doctor,

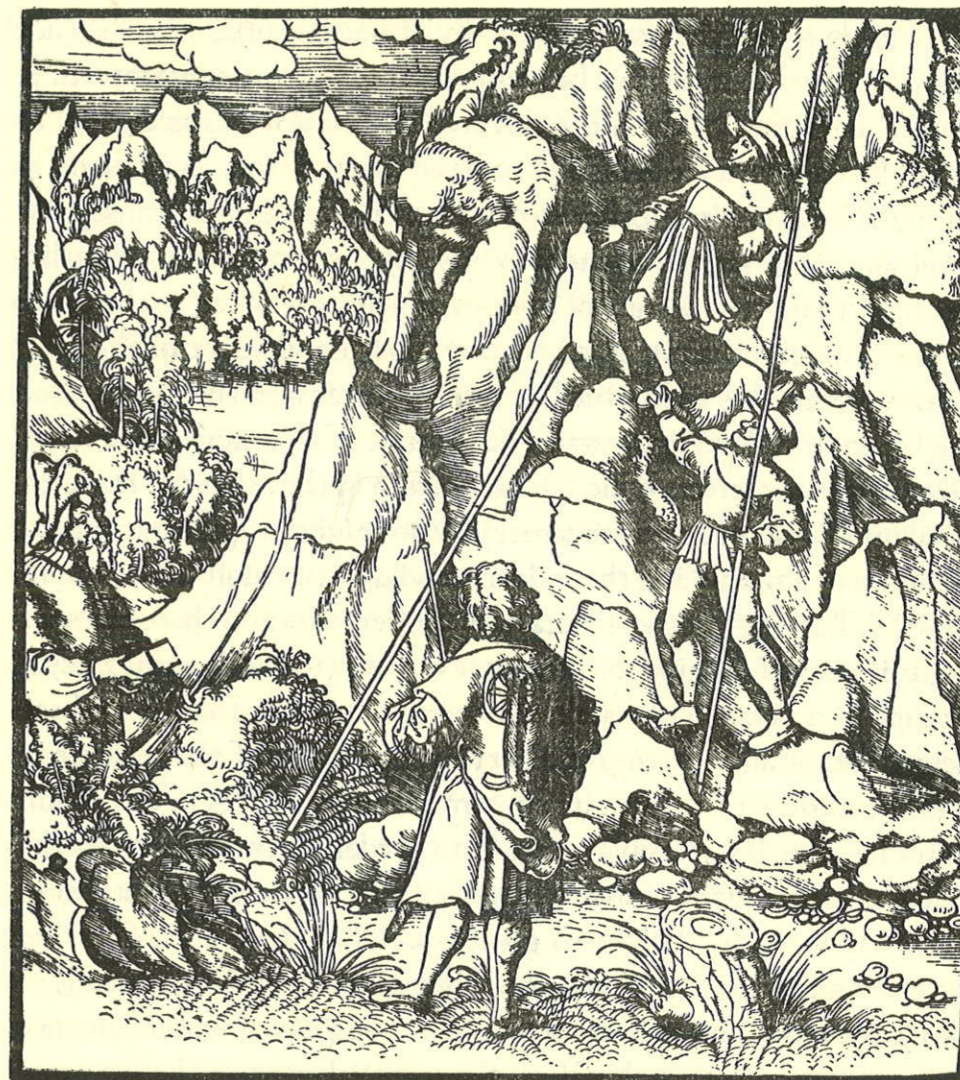
JACOB AVIENUS.



HAVE determined for the future, most learned Avienus, so long as the life divinely granted to me shall continue, each year to ascend a few mountains, or at least one, when the vegetation is flourishing, partly for the sake of becoming acquainted with the latter, partly for the sake of suitable bodily exercise and the delight of the spirit. For how great the pleasure, how great, think you, are the joys of the spirit, touched as is fit it should be, in wondering at the mighty mass of mountains while gazing upon their immensity and, as it were, in lifting one's head among the clouds. In some way or other the mind is overturned by their dizzying height and is caught up in contemplation of the Supreme Architect. Those, to be sure, whose spirits are sluggish wonder at nothing; they remain idly at home, do not enter the theatre of the universe, hide in a corner like dormice in the winter, do not consider that the human race has been established in the world in order that from its marvels it might infer a something greater, namely the Supreme Divine Will itself. With such sloth do they toil that like swine they are forever staring at the earth, never gazing with uplifted face at the heavens, never holding aloft their countenances to the stars. Let such, therefore, wallow in the mire, let them lie stupefied amid gains and sordid pursuits. The followers of



wisdom will proceed to contemplate with the eyes of the body and the spirit the sights of this earthly paradise: among which are by no means of least account the steep and lofty slopes of mountains, their inaccessible precipices, the hugeness of their flanks stretching to heaven, their high crags, their dark forests. I ask you, to use the words of our exceeding wise friend Grynæus, what is there to prevent such a heap of rocks, a weight of such vast size, where the softness of the ground is forever yielding, from being buried by constantly sliding in the depths toward which even by its own very nature it tends; particularly nowhere more than at the bases of these mountains, where the earth is rather soft and marshy: so that it must needs be either that their foundations are of unmeasured depth; or that even as the roots of trees, they are very widely spread. How is it that often as of set purpose rocks will so overhang; in vain threatening ruin for such ages as to seem impossible by any force to hold back? And with what intent do such heights uplift themselves? Within these vaults forsooth is begotten that continual supply of water anon bursting forth in so great a course, while the air shut within the hollows of their sides with icy echo ceaselessly distils to drops: and these presently drawn together into one stream become forthwith, by their constancy, springs supplying lakes, ponds and rivers in abundance with so great an amount of water. Lo! such a blessing do we owe to those mighty masses, to so amazing a miracle of nature hidden within them. The rest of them indeed, even those of the smaller sort, either provide wider spaces, through the swelling of sunny hills, since the flat places of the earth have been appropriated to other uses; or like a rampart that is set up they shut out the hostile quarter of the world. For the most part they turn aside and draw off into the neighboring fields the courses of rivers; not seldom also they provide implements of iron, the stuff not only for cultivating the land and building fortifications, such as timber, stones and iron; but for conducting



*Cherudank  
in need of  
assistance*

business, that is to say silver and gold. Grynæus has these lines in his notes on Aristotle's book *Concerning the World*; and since I esteem most highly the judgment and style of this man and especially hold in the highest regard things philosophical, I have preferred to quote him to you, rather than to discourse less pertinently in words of my own: to which thoughts if once more for a space they return to the mountains you will grant indulgence.



I say therefore that he is an enemy of nature, whosoever has not deemed lofty mountains to be most worthy of great contemplation. Surely the height of the more elevated mountains seems already to have risen above a baser lot and to have escaped from our storms, as though lying within another world. There the force of the most powerful sun, of the air and of the winds is not the same. The snows linger perpetually, the softest of objects, which melts even at the touch of the fingers, reckons not at all for any glow or violence of the sun's heat: nor vanishes with time but rather freezes into the most enduring ice and everlasting crystal. The summit of Olympus shows even after a year the letters which were written in the ashes (of the sacrificial fires lit the previous summer). Who might properly reckon the varieties of animals and the fodder of wild beasts aloft in the mountains? Whatever in other places nature offers here and there but sparingly, in the mountains she presents everywhere and in sufficiency as though in a heap so to speak, she spreads it out, unfolds it, and sets before the eye all her treasure, all her jewels. And so of all the elements and the variety of nature the supreme wonder resides in the mountains. In these it is possible to see "the burden of the mighty earth," just as if nature were vaunting herself & making trial of her strength, by lifting to such a height so great a weight, which still of its own accord and by reason of the most heavy pressure is ever ready to slip downward. Hence gush most copious springs of water sufficient for moistening the earth. Often there are lakes upon the summits, as though nature were sporting and exulting at drawing upwards the water from afar out of the deepest wells of her caverns. It is possible to gaze upon the air spreading far and wide nourished and increased by the thin mountain mists of the waters. At times shut within hollow caves, it rouses an earthquake and in some places those are continuous. Fire also dwells there, by the aid of which, as if by that of an artisan, metals are fashioned. Elsewhere the sources of warm

healing baths give evidence of the presence of fire, which happens in a great many places in our Switzerland. There are places where the flames break forth, as on Aetna, Vesuvius and the mountains, close by Grenoble. In other places moreover, though it may give no sign of itself, still fire is lurking in the bowels of the earth. For why do not the mountains in the long succession of the centuries sink down; why are they not consumed by any storms, to which they are continually exposed, nor by the rushing waters of the rains? Doubtless by reason of the fire, which is the cause both of the generation of the mountains and likewise of their continuance, as is demonstrated by the testimony of Philo the philosopher. For when indeed the glowing substance hidden within the earth is hurled up aloft by its native force, it directs itself toward the region proper to it; and if it has found a breathing-hole, however small, it carries on high with it much earthy substance (as is evident in the craters of Aetna), and just as much as it is able. But as soon as it has burst forth from the earth itself, it is borne along a short path. Furthermore this earthy matter compelled to follow the fire as it bursts forth, rising to a great height is compressed into narrow compass, and finally ends in a point like a sword, mimicking the nature of fire: inasmuch as at such a time it must needs be that the lightest matter and the heaviest, which are opposites, strive against each other, since each is impelled by its own tendency to its own proper place, and on the other hand is drawn asunder by the violence of its opponent. Accordingly the fiery matter, dragging with it on high the earth, is impelled to turn backward when the earthy overcomes it; while the earth pressed to the lowest depths by its own gravity, and contrariwise lifted up by the fire, which of its own volition is taken up on high, and finally vanquished, though with difficulty, by its all-prevailing and sustaining force, is propelled aloft into the abode of fire and there remains. In this sense fire is, as the Stoics were wont to say, the "habitus" of the mountains, that is,



Theucrdank  
spears  
chamois  
before the  
assembled  
Court



a prison in which they are confined, which stretching everywhere begins at the centre and reaches to the uttermost ends. Therefore, since the force of all the elements and of the whole of nature is revealed as being most concentrated here, it is no wonder that the men of old stood in awe of a divine quality, as it were, in mountains and accordingly feigned to themselves many mountain-dwelling gods, such as the Fauns, the Satyrs, and Pan, to whom they attributed

goats' feet, calling them "half-goats" (goat-feet and goat-legs, in the Greek), on account of the shaggy roughness of the mountains and the fact that these animals are fond of mountain pastures. These same beings were held to be the creators of fright, because from this sort of contemplation of wild and very lofty places a kind of amazement arises within the mind, greater than that which human affairs inspire. But in particular Pan, the mountain-dweller, signifies the universe, of which as I have said, the fundamental parts reside in the mountains, proceed thence, and there exert their force most abundantly. Wherefore also Pan was crowned with a wreath of pine, as betokening that the pine offers something of the mountains, of the woods, something stately. They proclaim as his son Bucolio, since he was the first to teach the pasturing of cattle. It is possible to find that all the divine persons of nymphs were in former times reckoned in the various nooks of the mountains, Oreads, Alseids, Helionomes, Hydriads, Crenids, Epipotamids, Limnads, Naiads, Limoniads, Epimelids, Dryads, and Hamadryads (nymphs of the groves, the marshmeads, the brooks, the springs, the rivers, the ponds, nymphs of the meadows, nymphs of the flocks). Diana the huntress loves the mountains. The Muses frequent two-peaked Parnassus and the charming haunts of Helicon, also the heights of Aonia and of Pierus. Though these things be fabulous, still they hide a kernel of truth beneath their husks. Further (to return to the point from which I departed), those persons who do not scruple to say that the nature of mountains differs not a whit from that of trees are clearly ignorant as to why the mountains suffer no loss from diminishing with age and as to what is the manner of their arising. For just as the latter with the changes of the seasons lose their leaves and by turns grow young again, in the same manner likewise, say they, certain portions of the mountains are broken off and some in turn are born later; even though this accretion does not become known save after a long lapse of time, for



the reason that trees being endowed with a swifter nature get their growth rapidly, but mountains more slowly. Thence it comes about, say they, that the portions of the mountains which have arisen are scarcely observed by the perception of mankind, unless over a long period. Such persons, therefore, I leave with their opinion. But what of the fact that mountains are manifestly hollowed out into the great halls of caverns, like those of dwelling houses, which seem to have been reared not without painstaking care? Is it that torrents of water once upon a time there made a passage for themselves by violence, carrying earth and rocks along with them? Or, in the beginning, when by the action of fire the ground was heaved up unequally, was a space perchance left empty betwixt the vaulted sides? Or, again, did the fire seeking the highest regions make thin that which stood in its way? Or, in truth, do portions when smitten by earthquakes, with which they are so often disturbed, gape and yawn? The following fact, too, is not devoid of marvelousness, that the bases of mountains are soft and smooth, if they be compared with their summits, the huge mass of which is for the most part of flint. Doubtless the water coursing down softens the foot of them, which feels to excess the force of neither sun nor winds. The top being exposed to sun and wind becomes dry, whatever there is of moisture runs off, leaving it parched. When, therefore, the lighter and watery portions have been filtered away, whatever is hard, dense and especially earthy alone remains, which thereupon turns to stone whether through the force of cold or through the violence of heat (which in hard, compact bodies is greater), doubtless from the innate fire which acts very little upon the lower portions and those which border on them, but in the highest degree upon the crest by reason of its pyramidal shape. Why then do the snows linger upon the ridges, while they melt about the flanks and base? The lowest stratum of air is warmed by the refracted rays of the sun and dissolves the snow; but that reflux does not extend so



God  
preserved  
Cheerdank  
from  
falling to  
his Scath

far as the crest due to the doubling back of the rays upon themselves. But why do they not liquefy by reason of that inborn fire, which acts most mightily upon the summit? The force of the fire ends a little below the highest point (otherwise it would come forth as in the case of the mountains which blaze up), and it has earth and exceeding thick rocks as though for a cover for itself; a cover which the apex of the fire does not pierce, being now, as it were, at its extreme point too



thin and feeble, while the heavier and denser earth overpowers it. Thus it comes to an end before the summit is reached. The snows moreover are nourished, as it were, by the cold air and by the moist and icy vapors and they endure.

Whence comes it that mountainous regions are rich in forests? Because they have an abundance of nourishment, that is to say a bubbling source of waters, a copious supply of rain, and a great quantity of snow. The snow indeed is of great advantage, since in gradually dissolving it sinks into the soil and all the moisture is not lost by rushing down in one single flow. For thus also can the earth best be broken up, since the heat is hemmed in and enclosed on every side. In fact by the outside packing and by confinement of the cold the interior heat is increased (a fact which is evident in wells warmer during the winter); this heat drawn in by the roots is distributed throughout the entire shoot. Add to this that for the most part they are barren, or at least are not so luxuriant in fruit-bearing as the cultivated sort, a fact which contributes much to their shortness of life. Nor, on the evidence of Theophrastus, are they like the others attacked by disease. Whence do the mountains furnish so great a supply of water? The indwelling fire stirs up many vapors, conceived in the hollow caves; when these seek an outlet, they are seized upon by the cold and are condensed. This is a thing we experience also in our own bodies, which when heated by exercise give off vapor which presently by the comparatively cool air is changed into drops of sweat. Likewise it happens in the case of those alembics contrived by the chemists, in which through the action of fire, fluids are evaporated and drawn off. There are full many other things on account of which I am captivated beyond measure by scenes afforded by the mountains. And since in your home land they are most lofty, and above all, as I hear, most fruitful in plant life, the desire has come over me to go to visit them, whereto your friendship at the same time entices me. In order,

however, that I might not without some gift approach so dear a friend, it has been my wish to gather together in some sort for your pleasure whatever on the spur of the moment should present itself to me, handed down from the ancients, on the subject of milk and of the products thereof. For this theme seemed not unsuitable to your nation, a large part of whom are preparers of milk-food, adapting milk to various victuals. Of this number that well-known smooth cheese is deemed famous, which being seasoned with fragrant herbs wins great favor with all foreigners among whom it is wont to be brought. Moreover, you will pardon me if much has been brought together

without regard to order, bearing in mind that such  
an assortment is commonly read  
without weariness.

Farewell.



At Zürich, the month of June, in the year of  
the salvation of mankind 1541.



DESCRIPTION OF  
THE RIVEN MOUNTAIN, OR MOUNT PILATUS  
AS THEY COMMONLY CALL IT,  
NEAR LUCERNE, IN SWITZERLAND,  
BY CONRAD GESNER.



CONRAD GESNER,  
PHYSICIAN, SENDS GREETINGS TO J. CHRYSOSTOME  
HUBER, THE DISTINGUISHED  
PHYSICIAN:



SINCE it is my habit, in accordance with an old custom of mine, both for mental recreation and for my health, to undertake a journey, preferably in the mountains, either annually or every other year, it was recently my desire, my dear Huber, to visit you at Lucerne, together with our friends, Peter Hafner, the stone engraver, Peter Boutinus of Avignon, the pharmacist, and John Thomas, the painter and a relative of mine by marriage, all young men skilled each in his own art. In that place you bestowed upon us all the kind offices of courtesy; and there also we were entertained right honorably, both privately by several citizens, and even publicly besides, wine being poured in abundance to do us honor. On the following day, having procured from the governor, the eminent Nicolas von Meggen, a most valorous knight, the privilege (as is customary) of ascending Mount Pilatus, we departed. Moreover whatever we noted upon that journey I have determined to describe in the following brief account and to dedicate to you; so that by that means I may both present to you an evidence, such as it is, of our gratitude, and at the same time request of you that whatever error or omission has been made by me in this description you will correct and supply. It may well be that you can do both, since in the very famous city of



Lucerne, close by the mountain which I am describing, you follow the calling of a physician, rejoice in the friendships of numerous powerful men of that place, excel in learning and judgment, and also have recently ascended the mountain yourself. But if not only concerning this mountain but others also, especially of our Switzerland (in which feature this country abounds beyond almost all regions), you either see personally anything noteworthy in certain instances or get it from men worthy of trust, you will at some time write me in full of it. I myself (if I live) will also add my own observations, so that an entire little book may be composed at last on mountains and their wonders. But for the present, though in former times I have traversed a great many and much higher mountains in various sections of Switzerland, it has seemed good on account of my fresh memory of it to write separately of yours only, which is called

The Broken Mountain.

Farewell.



Zurich, August the twenty-eighth,  
in the year 1555.

# A DESCRIPTION OF

MONS FRACTUS NEAR LUCERNE AND CHIEFLY

geographical particulars with reference to the famous

POOL OF PILATE THERE.



F great renown among the Swiss is the city of Lucerne, famed especially for a monastery, the founder of which was a certain Wighard, an elder, and brother of Rupert, Duke of Alemannia and Suabia, about the year eight hundred and sixteen from the birth of Our Lord. For the city is reputed to have been founded after the monastery and likewise even by reason of it. The citizens are kindly and hospitable, and not a few of them wealthy. Many evidences are at hand of their warlike courage. The singular charm of the place, and also advantages in regard to fishing, transport and defense are provided by the lake and the river Reuss, which emerges at that point from the lake which it has created. A pair of open bridges extend across the stream and a like number of covered bridges across the Lake, all being of planks. One of the two over the Lake, which is the longer, spans a distance of about five hundred paces. On its other side the city is guarded and fortified by a high hill, which also is girdled by walls. But the description of the city I leave to others.

The beginning of Mons Fractus on the side where we ascended it is at a distance of about an hour and a half. (I hear that it is ascended also by another route which is shorter, but likewise steeper.) From



Chueerdank  
rcind  
his horse  
to avoid  
abalanches



that point the ascent is made through woods, valleys, meadows and gentle slopes. Within about an hour there appear on the right the ruins of a dismantled castle, which is reputed to have been occupied by a certain English noble, for through this region an army of English once ranged. Thence we arrive in a valley that is called Eigenthal in which numberless cattle pasture; and there are observed many huts, stalls and hay-barns of the herdsmen or dairymen,—“milk drinkers

and simple in life, most righteous of mankind.” However they inhabit these places only during the four summer months; if indeed in that place they are to be given the name of summer, because toward midsummer or later even, on the summits of the highest mountains, you might say there was continual winter and also, a little lower, spring-time. For in midsummer or even in autumn flowers are seen in those places which in the plain belong to spring, such as violets, and the flowers of coltsfoot and of butterbur. Fruit indeed there is none, except perchance the strawberry & the blackberry. Lower down, to be sure, autumn also has its place in bringing forth the fruits of certain trees, especially cherries, which however ripen late, seeing that it is under a sun not of summer but rather of spring. At the base the now warmer sun with the reflection of its rays produces a real summer. And so the highest part of mountains of this sort, that which lies about the summit, I should term wintry, inasmuch as winter always reigns there, along with snows; or if at times the snows should melt on some less exalted peaks (as in the instance of the one about which I am writing), with cold and with winds. The second part, which slopes downward below the summit, I should term vernal; although within it winter is exceedingly long, while spring is short. The third part I call autumnal, because beside spring or winter it also holds somewhat of autumn; and the lowest, summery. So that in the highest section one season of the year is recognized, in the downward slope two, in the third portion three, and in the lowest four. As for ourselves, on the twentieth day of August we found a small number of cherries about half way up the mountain; and farther up in the vernal portion some strawberries were found, along with the blackberry and the fruit of the raspberry. By means of these we refreshed ourselves from thirst and hunger.

We passed the night moreover in a hay-barn of the valley of Eigenthal at the home of a right kindly and hospitable herdsman,



who entertained us with various foods made from dairy products. Nor yet was wine lacking, having been brought by the bailiff who showed us the way. Because a guide was necessary for two reasons: first on account of the scruples of the inhabitants, who will admit no one to the Pool of Pilate (even binding themselves annually by oath not to do so) who has not brought with him some responsible man from among the citizens by whom they may be assured that permission to climb thither has been granted by the governor; and finally so that we might not miss the easy way to the peak. Through the valley flows a stream, in which, though it is very small and exceedingly cold, nevertheless trout of the best quality and of quite large size are caught; and these alone in fact in the upper reaches; lower, that is to say about mid-distance, crabs are also caught, and grayling. On the rocky and precipitous peaks and ridges amid tortuous windings, whence the name of the mountain, the chamois have their abode, and if I be not mistaken the ibex also, which is popularly called "goat-horns;" and in Crete the "wild-goat" by Homer; and along with these marmots. The nature of the latter I have described in *The Natural History of Quadrupeds*. There is likewise a sort of mountain hen, like the alpine pheasants, and white grouse or partridges with shaggy feet nest there.

From midway up the mountain and from the valley of Eigenthal the succeeding climb is higher and harder up to the highest hut or "senn," to give it the name used by the people themselves. A little below this there is a spring on the right hand in the side of the hill, hidden in a little hollow of the earth, the exceedingly pure and cold water of which refreshed us amazingly from weariness, thirst and heat, when we drank from it to satisfaction and ate our bread moistened in it; than which pleasure I know not whether any more welcome and more epicurean (though in the highest degree temperate and thrifty) could fall to the lot of human senses. We read that Epi-



Zeucedank  
 caught himself  
 in the rocks  
 after being  
 lifted in the air  
 by a Gale

curus, the advocate of pleasure, was from time to time content to dine upon bread and water, doubtless because from that most thrifty fare he gained not only for the time being a simple and natural pleasure, but on the following day also a soundness of the senses and brain and a clearness of the head. But since the force of bodily pleasure by which the senses are soothed corresponds with the strain or relaxation of an opposite state, as in the balance one side rises so much the higher in



proportion as the other is weighed down; and where no opposite and unpleasant state of the senses has preceded, neither can any pleasure follow; it needs must be admitted that never in the course of nature is a drink of cold water more delightful than when we have become aglow with thirst, heat and weariness, a thing which happens especially in mountain regions and on a long climb. And so when at the same time we rest from the hardest effort, cool off again after the greatest heat, wet our throats after violent thirst, and are fed after hunger greater than ordinary, above all in a state of mind meanwhile as calm and care-free as possible, and enlivened by the most delightful society, comradeship, and conversation of friends:—who would not consider this the supreme pleasure?

Which indeed of the senses does not enjoy its own proper pleasure? For to consider the matter of *feeling*, the whole body, troubled by heat, is singularly refreshed on meeting with the cooler air prevailing in the mountains, which from every quarter blows upon the surface of the body and is breathed in to our full capacity; this is in accord with the well-known line of Homer: "He revived when the cold breath of Boreas blew upon him." On the other hand, the same body, having experienced wind and cold, is warmed by the sun, by walking, or by a fire in the huts of the herdsmen.

*Sight* is charmed by the wondrous and unwonted appearance of mountains, ridges, rocks, forests, valleys, streams, springs and meadows. As for color, for the most part everything is fresh and blooming; as to the form of the things which are seen, strange and unusual are the aspects of crags, rocks, winding ways and other things, worthy of admiration not only for their form but also for their size and height. If you wish to extend your field of vision, cast your glance round about, and gaze off far and wide at everything. There is no lack of lookouts and crags on which you may seem to yourself to be already living with your head in the clouds. If on the other hand you



Theuerdank  
sated by his  
climbing-iron  
on a mossy  
slope

should prefer to contract your vision, you will gaze on meadows and verdant forests, or even enter them; or to narrow it still more, you will examine dim valleys, shadowy rocks and darksome caverns. Moreover, while there is change and variety in all things, it is most delightful of all in those perceived by the senses. In truth nowhere else is such great variety found within such small compass as in the mountains; in which, not to speak of other things, one may in a single day behold



& enter upon the four seasons of the year, summer, autumn, spring and winter. In addition, from the highest ridges of mountains the whole dome of our sky will lie boldly open to your gaze, and the rising and setting of the constellations you will easily behold without any hindrance; while you will observe the sun setting far later and likewise rising earlier.

As for *hearing*, it will be diverted by the conversation, jests and witticisms of friends, as well as by the exceeding sweet songs of the little birds in the woods, and finally by the very silence of the solitude. There is nothing here to be offensive to the ears, nothing to be troublesome, no uproar or noise of cities, no strife of mankind. Here amid the deep and, as it were, religious hush, from the lofty ridges of the mountains you will almost seem to perceive the actual harmony, if such there be, of the celestial spheres.

Likewise pleasing *odors* from herbs, flowers & shrubs of the mountains present themselves. For the same plants grow in the mountains as in the plain, only in the former more fragrant and more efficacious as remedies. The air here is far more free and healthful, and not corrupted by gross exhalations to the same degree as on level ground, not contagious or foul as in cities and other dwelling places of men. This air distributed by the nostrils to the brain, and by the arteries to the lungs and heart, not only is not harmful but is even soothing to them.

I have already above sung the praises of that exceptional delight to the *taste*, a drink of cold water. This indeed will afford joy to the weary and thirsty with no injury at all, or with much less than would be the case in the plain. For in the first place, the water itself in the mountains is purer and better, especially about half way up, unless I mistake: at this point it is not too cold or like snow, and yet it is pure and filtered and still exposed to the open air; while about the summits either there is none, or else it is excessively cold and glacial and not sufficiently pure or filtered. But at the base of the mountains

it is less cold, and hence less delightful, and for the most part in air which is less free and more unwholesome. In the next place, very cold water often does less harm than that which is less cold, since by the reaction to a contrary quality, heat is increased in the stomachs of the drinkers, particularly of the younger sort. For since the colder air in these regions by continually cooling the surface does not permit the pores to open too much and the interior heat to pass off and be dissipated, and since the cold from the drink passes inward, it must be asserted that the natural heat hedged in on both sides by an opposing cold condenses more within itself and increases. Furthermore, movement and walking following closely upon the drink bring it about that the water is in part evacuated through the kidneys and in sweat, and in part is heated; so that the cold water cannot at once be carried to the heart and quench its heat, which would be the cause of death or of very serious illness. Then too, immediately after breathing cold air, the heart is less warm, and is therefore less distressed by a drink of cold water. For it is evident that things which are hotter are more quickly influenced and overcome by cold. But that this is the truth of the matter, namely that cold water may be drunk more safely in the mountains, even in large quantities, I wish to be believed not simply through our reasoning processes, but much more as a matter of experience. For both do the dwellers on Mount Pilatus make this assertion, and I along with many friends, not only on this mountain, but also on many others previously, have put it to the test without harm; while in other respects being phlegmatic and a man of cold stomach I am easily distressed by a drink of water. They also say that below that spring which I have mentioned there is another, renowned as a cure for fever, particularly the tertian. Yet they bid one drink of it liberally and to the point of disgust. Whence, since vomiting generally follows and the too feverish heat is quenched both by the evacuation of solid matter and bile and by the change in the heat, it is not at all



strange that in many the fever is abated. For it is probable that only the more hardy can address themselves to that spring; and that they sweat before and after. And so the tertian fever, which otherwise is wont to be short, is easily dispelled in one whose courage is strong, when such evacuations are added to the change. The taste will also be pleased by the fruits of the mountain and by the dairy products, far more excellent in the mountains, which I will name below. Finally, food and drink of whatever sort after exertions of this kind will be far more pleasing to the palate and stomach than amid idleness and repose.

Let us then conclude that from walks in the mountains undertaken in the company of friends the highest of all pleasures and the most charming of all delights of the senses are obtained, provided there be no hindrance in the weather, and none in either mind or body. For to a man who is sick or unsound of limb nothing of this sort can be welcome. So also if his mind be ill, if he have not laid aside anxieties and passions, in vain are the pleasures of body and senses sought for. But give me a man at least moderately endowed in mind and body, educated liberally, and not too much given to idleness and luxury or to lust; also I should wish him curious about natural objects and an admirer of them, so that even from the contemplation and admiration of the mighty works of the Supreme Architect & of the enormous variety of nature as it exhibits itself in the mountains, as though in a single vast pile, the delight of his spirit might be added to the harmonious delight of all his senses; what other sort of pleasure will you find, pray, at least within the bounds of nature, more honorable, more complete, and more perfect from every point of view? But walking itself and fatigue are tiresome and tedious. There is also danger in the difficulties of the region and in the steep places. The allurements of food and bed are lacking. Grant that these things are true; it will be pleasant thereafter to recall the toils



A huntsman  
falls and  
the curdank  
crosses the  
slope by  
another route

and the dangers; it will gratify you to turn over these things in your mind and to tell them to friends. Actually the very pleasure derived from repose following upon toil is destined to be so much the greater, and health even more rugged, in a man such as I require, with at least an ordinary constitution. For all the parts of the body are exercised in a man walking, and sometimes leaping; all the sinews and muscles stretch and toil, some in the ascent, others in the descent; and in a dif-



ferent way in each of these cases, according as the direction is straight ahead or slanting, as happens in the mountains. But it is possible and advisable to employ a certain moderation in walking; and it is a fact, as Aristotle writes in his *Problemata*, "that people walking over uneven places become less exhausted than they would on the level." That is to say, those who by turn ascend and descend, as is the nature of mountain journeys, are less fatigued than those who journey either for a long time across a plain, or only up or only down. It is possible also for the dangers of rocks and of other sorts to be avoided by those who have come to understand either that they are subject to giddiness or are otherwise unfitted for overcoming steep places. It is something to have got so far, if farther is not granted. As for foods, I have told above and will tell again later what ones and what quality are found in the mountains, which assuredly will satisfy even fastidious men; especially since it is necessary for them to abstain for one or two days from their customary food. And those dairy products, although unusual, still work no harm at all to most walkers, because of the exercise. So that men fond of their palate, if only for this reason ought now and then to visit the mountains, that they might have a chance to drink cold water and enjoy milk and the various foods and delicacies made from it without injury to stomach and health; a thing which it is not permitted most at home, even if these things were at hand and of equal excellence. If, however, other foods were absolutely required, they can easily be brought by servants.

But couch, mattress, feather bed and pillows are lacking. O, soft and effeminate man! For you, hay will take the place of all these; it is soft, fragrant, composed of various herbs and the most health-giving flowers; your breathing at night will prove far more pleasant and wholesome. This you may spread beneath your head for a pillow, beneath your whole body for a mattress; and you may also spread it over you for a coverlet.

But I return to the geography of the mountain. In the highest cowherd's hut, after we had been refreshed with the richest and most delicious milk and had blown the alpine horn (of a length of about eleven feet, formed of two pieces of wood slightly bent and hollowed out, and cleverly bound together by withes), thence we turned to the left led by a milker from that hut. And presently becoming three-footed, that is to say leaning upon staves, to which they give the name "alpenstocks" and which they are wont to provide with an iron point, we climbed a long way without a path up an exceeding steep slope; at times we even crept along by taking hold of the clumps of grass; and among rocks and stones, with great toil, at length we came out on top. From here, besides other points far and wide, there was visible the territory subject to the people of Lucerne, Entlebach by name, lying to the west. On the summit rises an eminence of rock on which it is believed that Pilate used to take his seat and rouse up dreadful tempests. Upon it certain letters were to be seen, the names of those who had visited it, the year of our Lord, and certain emblems, national and familial. Thence we descended to a flat place on the right where we found a square open space, with just about room for six men to stretch out on, its edges raised all round and verdant with grass; but the soft spot in the center, about a foot and a half in extent every way, was bare and without growth, the earth in it being exposed, and it is asserted that nothing ever springs up there. On that spot, it is said, stood an enchanter, one of those men whom the accounts of our forefathers commonly termed "wandering scholars," the remnants of the Druids (as I have pointed out in *Mithridates the Many-tongued*) until by his machinations he drove Pilate from that lofty eminence which I have mentioned and cast him into the neighboring pool. From this point setting out again to the left we descended the slope for some time until at length we reached the lake, or more properly Pool of Pilate, situated on the level



A projecting  
rock prevents  
a chamois  
from striking  
Cheucrdank



ground of a little valley, possibly large enough for twelve men to lie down on, in which it is said Pilate sank. And in another and smaller one close by, his wife is said to have done likewise. The ground roundabout is marshy. If anything is purposely thrown in by a person, it is asserted that the entire region is threatened with storm and flood. Since this belief of the inhabitants has no reason or cause according to nature, it gains no credence with me. For though happenings and

prodigious events often follow what superstition and false beliefs predicted, it is not on that account that men of good repute should have blind faith in them. For my part, I believe Pilate never lived in these regions, and even if he had he would have had no power to do good or evil to men. But if anyone should say that evil spirits are permitted by Divine Providence to perform many things of this sort, and that Pilate was endowed with the nature of such a spirit, I reply that it shall not be said to be due to their own power if evil is wrought by evil spirits, but that the Lord God permits the faith of the impious and the superstitious, thus deceived and confirmed, to suffer the penalty for their impiety and superstition. For it is impious to attribute to any one but God the cause of any event or change in the universe. That is my belief, at any rate, but if any good and pious man will teach me better, I shall listen readily. They say this tarn never increases or dwindles, and they are surprised at that, since it is surrounded on all sides by hills, from which melting snows flow down. But the soil around it is swampy and full of openings, so that whatever flows down is easily swallowed up before it reaches the tarn. The depth is unknown, because it is sinful for them to try to find out or to touch the pool at all. I myself remember having seen a lake like this, but with no legend about it, on a very high mountain of Savoy, in the country of the Bodiontiü, behind the city of Cluses. It was almost circular, very small, but of such depth that it was thought to pierce the whole mountain. Indeed they added that an ox once fell in, and its head and horns were later found in some spring or other at the foot of the mountain near Cluses.

Eusebius (*Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, book II, chapter 7) and other historians too, tell how Pilate, in the time of C. Caligula, about forty years after the birth of our Lord, recalled from Judaea to Rome, was fearful of his fate at the hands of Caligula and killed himself (Jo. Nauclerus says pierced by his own hand when sent into exile under



Claudius at Lyons, after being banned by Caligula); where this really happened they do not say. Others have it that, having left Rome to go into exile, he was soon after drowned in the Rhone near Vienne, a city in Gaul, and in that region, writes Otto de Freising (bk. II, ch. 13), boats even now are imperilled, according to the riverside folk.

From that region of the magician, as they call him, if we had traveled in a nearly straight line by the spine, as it were, of the mountain, facing Lucerne and the North, we would have come in an hour to a place in the mountain they call Widderfeld where, if I am not mistaken, there is a sort of level plain. In this mountain is seen a cavern, called *Man Loch* or *Moon Loch*, that is the cave of the man or of the moon. Its entrance, they say, is as narrow as a door, the interior widens and admits some light. There is a path which can be followed about one hundred yards or paces; finally one reaches water. And if one continues, they jokingly say, at the end of the cave an iron door would be found. As for me, the story about the door is not true; the rest I easily believe, for I have heard it both from others and from an old cowherd, an honest man, who said he himself had gone more than one hundred paces into the cave and had brought out from the vault the thing they call moon milk, of which I shall write more later. From there they say there is a descent to the South into the Nidwald, but a difficult one. As for us, on leaving the Pilate tarn, as the day was nearly ended and there were signs of rain for the evening, we resolved to reach Lucerne quickly, so we climbed a ridge to the left and came down by a road good enough so that the cattle use it regularly. It would have permitted us also to reach the Pilate Pool more quickly and conveniently if we had taken it before. So we returned to the city at nightfall, delayed a little while on the mountain because of the onslaught of rain.



ON CONRAD GESNER

THE MOUNTAINEERING OF THEUERDANK

BIBLIOGRAPHY



ON CONRAD GESNER  
BY J. MONROE THORINGTON



THE GREAT MÜNSTER,

with its quaint figure of Charlemagne enthroned in a niche of the west tower, stands above the bank of the Limmat in the city of Zürich. Spreading southward from the quay is the blue lake, dotted with sails, and high in the noonday haze, beyond orchard-clad slopes, is a sweep of snow on the Tödi range. Thus it was when Matthew Merian drew it for his *Topographia Helvetiae*, and thus even a century and a quarter earlier, the year 1516, when Conrad Gesner was born there. It was a quiet countryside, and had been so since the days of the earliest Celtic lake-dwellers.

But the boy, Gesner, came into a world of amazing change. Little more than sixty years had passed since the fall of Constantinople ended the line of Roman emperors, and scarcely a generation since Columbus reached strange shores—the end of the Middle Ages. In printing, the incunabula period had just closed. Leonardo da Vinci, father of experimental science, was still living, an old man in a new world, while Copernicus was not yet ready to publish his dangerously novel theory of the earth and planets wheeling around the sun. The voices which stirred the land were those of Luther and Calvin. Yet the Renaissance was not a sudden break with the mysticism and authority of the Middle Ages, but rather a gradual, inevitable result of a series of circumstances favorable to the development of new ideas. And the Reformation was by no means the solution for all of



man's spiritual problems. It was still a time when the study was thought to be the only proper place for a learned man; one ran afoul of church and state when probing too deeply into natural phenomena. So it must have been that unquestionable courage was outstanding among the qualities of the sixteenth century scholars who brought fame to Zürich. Their incredible energy and industry have been lauded, but without great courage they could not have performed the tasks of professional life in a world repeatedly decimated by pestilence and torn by religious wars. It was necessary in Switzerland to declare for or against the Reformation, and the answer might mean death.

To Conrad Gesner, a poor urchin gazing from the town wall at the brilliant panorama of water and mountains, these mysteries, if known at all, must have seemed of slight importance against the need for daily bread. When he was fifteen the news came that his father, a furrier who had marched away to fight in the Protestant cause, had fallen in the battle of Kappel. Yet this tragedy was, in a measure, the making of the youth.

The learning of his day centered about the ancient chapter school of the Münster—the Carolinum—and Charlemagne ensconced above watched complacently over the university his gifts had made possible. The Zürich scientists formed a notable group, eager disciples of the Virgilian urge *rerum cognoscere causas*. In that galaxy the star of Conrad Gesner, whose manifold genius soon became evident, shone brightly. Assisted by friends, he proceeded with his studies—the classics and Hebrew, natural philosophy—at Zürich, Strasbourg, Bourges and Paris. Later, medicine at Basel and a brief stay at Montpellier. At the age of twenty-one he became professor of Greek at Lausanne, and four years later accepted the chair of physical science and natural history at Zürich. His father's death for the new faith had gained for him the favor of Heinrich Bullinger, chief pas-

tor of the city, a man whose interest was essentially sympathetic and unifying. Bullinger brought his godson, Josias Simler, a youth of fourteen, to Zürich to complete his education. In 1552, aged twenty-two, he was chosen professor of New Testament exposition at the Carolinum, and in 1560 professor of theology. Gesner and Simler had much in common and were soon fast friends; at Gesner's death Simler wrote his biography, on which Henry Morley's modern essay is based.

During his lifetime Gesner published no fewer than seventy-two books, and at the time of his death eighteen others were in manuscript. For his projected botany text there were 1500 drawings. When the first four volumes of the enormous *Historia Animalium* (in which are included legends of the chamois and the ibex) were completed, the Emperor Ferdinand granted him a crest, and ordered the commemorative portrait medal which was struck at Vienna in 1564.

The physician of the sixteenth century was far from being a specialist—geology, botany and many other things came under his eye. But even for his day Gesner's interests were diverse and profound. His *Universal Dictionary*, published when he was twenty-seven, contained summaries of all the known books in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French and German; because of this work he has been called the "father of bibliography." Today he is best known by the botanists, and he was probably the first to point out that plants must be classified according to the structure of flowers and fruit, and not by roots, stalks and leaves as was then the custom. His home was the center of his life; there he had his collection of natural curiosities, the herbarium and garden which were famous among the learned men of all Europe. The youthful marriage, which had distressed his friends because it brought no dowery, was further clouded by his wife's chronic ill health. Death, coming to him with the plague of 1565, he met with resolute tranquillity, and so ended a life devoted to learning, to his family, and to the enjoyment of the mountains.



In the evolution of mountain climbing Conrad Gesner stands midway between Johann Müller (Rhellicanus) of Berne, who in his *Stockhorniad* (1537) described a pleasant mountain picnic, and Josias Simler, whose *De Alpibus Commentarius* (1574) gave the first directions for travel above the snow-line. That the Zürich scientists, joyous in mountaineering, made an abrupt break with tradition is apparent on glancing through the dry-as-dust pages of earlier alpine historians: Albert von Bonstetten, Dean of Einsiedeln; Felix Schmid (Faber), a Dominican friar of Ulm, and Conrad Tüerst, whose map of Switzerland is the earliest known. The memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini show that even that lusty fellow found no pleasure in crossing the Bernina and Albula passes going north from Padua, or returning by the Simplon. But then, he was clad in mail, carried a gun, and rode through snow storms.

In 1543 the Froschauer press of Zürich brought out Gesner's little tract *Libellus de Lacte*. It would be unknown today had not the author added as a prefix a letter written two years before to his friend Vogel (Avienus) of Glarus, which is entitled *De Montium Admiratione*. This is the new note—"...as long as it may please God to grant me life, I will ascend several mountains, or at least one, every year at the season when the flowers are in their glory, partly for the sake of examining them, and partly for the sake of good bodily exercise and of mental delight." It is an inspiring passage, the aesthetic sense acknowledged, the continued interest manifested.

Twelve years later Gesner's *Descriptio Montis Fracti sive Montis Pilati* came from the press of the brothers Andreas and Jacob Gesner. Its author had ascended the eastern peak (The Gnepfstein, 6290 ft.), and visited the shallow lake in which Pontius Pilate was said to lurk. This trip was even then no novelty, although those who took part in the first adventure during the fourteenth century had been thrown into prison. In 1518, four Swiss scholars, including Mycon-

ius of Lucerne, Gesner's first teacher, had reached the peak under the guidance of a local shepherd, who consented to lead them only on condition that they try no experiments at the lake. Duke Ulrich of Württemberg is said to have repeated this climb the same year. It was not until 1585, when both Gesner and Simler were dead, that the pastor of Lucerne, attended by citizens of requisite temerity, climbed to the lake, threw stones in it and at last dispelled the superstition.

It is extraordinarily interesting to find in the letter to Huber which is the preface to the description of the trip to Mount Pilatus, that Gesner was planning to write and collecting materials for the sort of book which Simler actually published in his *Commentarius*. Gesner asks Huber's help in collecting information about the Alps, for a little book about the mountains and their wonders—*ut de montibus eorumque miraculis integer aliquando libellus condatur*. And note also, since the elevation attained weighs heavily with mountaineers, how Gesner writes to Huber that, in other years, he had reached summits much higher than the Gnepfstein—*etsi plurimos olim et multos altiores in diversis Helvetiae locis montes peragrarem*.

But Gesner's place in connection with the Pilate legend, his actual attainments as a mountaineer, and his projected work on the Alps interest us less than Gesner the man, walking joyful and unafraid in the mountains, delighting in rustic pleasure (this was two centuries before Rousseau), making light of toil and hardship, upbraiding youth that would scorn hay for a blanket. It is thus that he takes his place among the greatest of the early mountaineers, the eloquent exponent of a new and intrepid devotion to high country. We do not know what other summits he may have reached in his annual ascents, but one is certain that he would find a welcome place in any company of modern climbers. In this first complete English translation of his two works on mountaineering something of our lasting indebtedness to Conrad Gesner is expressed.



## THE MOUNTAINEERING OF THEUERDANK

BY J. MONROE THORINGTON



*Love wing'd my Hopes and taught me how to fly  
Far from base earth, but not too high.*

### MAXIMILIAN,

son of Frederick III of Germany and Eleanora of Portugal, was born in 1459 at Neustadt, Lower Austria, and married the lovely Mary of Burgundy in 1477. It is one of the great romances of history, for she was the good companion of his youth, and when she died five years later, the result of falling from her horse, Maximilian was inconsolable. Never again, throughout his life, could he hear her name without emotion. Long afterward, when he had become Emperor Maximilian I, he made himself the hero of the allegorical poem *Theuerdank*, whose heroine, Ehrenreich, is Mary of Burgundy.

In the year 1517 Hans Schönsperger was in the walled city of Nuremberg, having come there from Augsburg for the express purpose of printing this book. It was a noted center of art, where Albrecht Dürer, the great designer in wood-engraving, had made a name for himself, achieving a new note in the introduction of mountain backgrounds in many of his drawings. His pupil, Hans Leonard Schaufelin, evinced such talent in the same direction that he came to Maximilian's attention and, in 1512, received the commission to make il-

ustrations for *Theuerdank*. Leonard Beck, Hans Burgkmair (best known as the creator of the 135 prints for Maximilian's *Triumphs*) and other artists were also employed.

*Theuerdank* was intended as a sequel to another volume, *Weiss Kunig*, in which Maximilian had written his father's biography as well as described his own youth and education. But *Weiss Kunig*, with Burgkmair's brilliant engravings, was not destined to be printed until two and a half centuries after Maximilian's death. Yet his early romance was ever in his mind, and Charlotte Young, in *The Dove in the Eagle's Nest*, considers it "remarkable and touching in a man who married at eighteen and was a widower at twenty-two, that in both books the happy union with his lady love is placed at the end." Perhaps for this, as much as anything, Maximilian is called "the last of the knights."

It must not be forgotten that *Theuerdank* was published less than sixty years after the Gutenberg Bible, and even Caxton did not set up his press in Westminster until 1477; so the book is important in showing the advance in the art of printing during this period. Its story, composed in doggerel rhyme by Melchior Pfintzing, Maximilian's chaplain, relates the adventures of the knight Theuerdank on his journey to the court of Burgundy. The three malicious captains who conspire to prevent the marriage and to kill the hero on his way are figurative characters, Fürwittig representing the recklessness of youth; Unfalo, the misadventures of maturity; and Neydelhart, the enmities of political intrigue. But Theuerdank conquers all the difficulties imposed; the conspirators are executed, and the adventurous knight comes to his betrothed in all the happy splendor in which good fairy-tales should end.

As Archduke of Austria and later, as Emperor, Maximilian was a constant devotee of the chase, and his experiences form the basis of many events in the pilgrimage of Theuerdank. In more than thirteen



instances there are records of chamois hunting, and Schaüfelin's engravings present a lively record of the methods and equipment of that ancient time. The illustrations are the earliest and, for more than a century the only depictions of Alpine technique and mountain dangers.

Legend asserts that the young Maximilian had a predilection for scaling cathedral towers; but, while he became an assiduous hunter, himself bringing down almost 1000 chamois, he was a mountaineer only in the sense of accepting the arduous scrambling incidental to his sport. He seems to have had a steady head, and contemporary opinion indicates that few of his huntsmen could outdistance him. We do not know that he ever set foot on the actual summit of an Alpine peak, although he wrote that he had climbed on the highest mountains of Europe, and that no one had been higher or nearer Heaven.

Maximilian's equipment was primitive. Cowl and hood, worn with broad-brimmed hat must have been warm on a summer day, but were no doubt a comfort in cold and stormy weather. His doublet was roomy enough, but the hose seem tight and binding over the knees. The boots appear light and pliable, sometimes nailed, but more often strengthened by formidable climbing-irons of the rigid, four-claw type still in use two centuries later. Ancient crampons are illustrated in Scheuchzer's *Itinera Alpina* and Saussure's *Voyages*, the latter being reproduced in the *Atlas to Ebel's Traveler's Guide*. A small three-pronged iron is shown in Pieth and Hager's *Pater Placidius a Spescha*. They were held to the foot by a binding, sometimes merely criss-crossed in front of the ankle, but usually attached by separate straps crossing toe and ankle.

A curved horn was slung at his waist, to call in the beaters or to serve as a distress signal. The staff might be of any length up to four klaffters (one klaffter equals 1.7 meters!), and could be used to drive the chamois on to a ledge, or to push the animal over the cliff when at close quarters. The point, of sharpened metal, formed a weapon of

offense to be hurled at the object of the chase. Aside from being a lance it assisted its possessor on steep slopes and was even used as a vaulting-pole if the occasion demanded. Quaintly enough, when not in use, it was convenient to keep these poles in a church, and cases were made for them along the sides of the tallest organ-pipes.

The dangers which Maximilian encountered were for the most part those known to every climber, and he learned from his mistakes as do most of us. Stones gave him a good deal of trouble: Captain Unfalo arranged many a trap from which Theuerdank narrowly escaped.

Once, while hunting chamois in the Steinach Valley, a peasant, subsidized for the deed, threw down a boulder and knocked the hat from our hero's head. On another day, while hunting chamois in the lower Inn Valley, a heavy rain loosened a rock-fall which cut off both of his spur rowels, but he saved himself from falling. Once Unfalo attempted his life by having hunting-dogs run across the slopes above and knock down stones, but a servant was struck instead. While hunting in the Steinach Valley, Theuerdank, seeing a rock thrown, promptly placed himself in a prone position and the missile bounded over his back. Finally he became so expert in dodging that when his huntsman was hit, on the cliffs above Zirl, Theuerdank gallantly held him up and prevented a fatal fall.

Smooth rock was another hazard. Unfalo directed Theuerdank along a narrow path in the Lech Valley leading to polished outcrops giving the appearance of recent glaciation. A peasant youth was bribed to frighten the horses, but Theuerdank hurriedly dismounted and obtained secure footing. Later, in the Steinach Valley again, it was arranged that Theuerdank should stand at the base of a cliff and shoot upwards with his crossbow at a chamois, the crafty intention being that the animal would then fall and obliterate him. There seems to have been a miscalculation, for the beast slid outward on a slanting ledge, leaving Theuerdank unscathed.



Once Captain Fürwittig arranged a chamois-hunt in the Inn Valley, near Hall, and Theuerdank caught his foot in a cleft from which he was only released by a faithful retainer. A short time afterward he was brought to a wall so precipitous that one of his feet hung out in space; but Theuerdank, without a trace of dizziness, hurled his staff and brought down the chamois which, otherwise, might have precipitated him into the abyss.

A bevy of beautiful ladies as audience was the lure which drew Theuerdank into the adventure from which grew the legend of the Martinswand. Chamois had sprung to a sharp pinnacle from which the huntsmen could not drive them, although many stones were thrown. Theuerdank knocked over two with his lance, only to find himself on a shelf so narrow that he could not go back. Hope was almost abandoned, when a daring huntsman suddenly appeared. "Hullo!" he shouted, "what brings you here?" "I am on the lookout," replied the Emperor. "And so am I," said the newcomer, "shall we venture down together?"

There are many versions of the story, the following being from the 1679 edition of *Theuerdank*:

"Three hours from Innsbruck, Maximilian went hunting in the mountains, at the spot called Martinswand. He ascended so high that he could not move a step forward or backward without danger of a fatal fall. The unlucky prince suddenly realized this and stood motionless with terror, seeing no outcome but certain death. It was impossible to assist him from above or from the sides. His companions and servants knew not how to help him, and stood with tears in their eyes, watching their master.

"The young prince, after remaining in this perilous situation for two whole days and a night, and seeing no hope of release, cast his mortal life to the winds and bethought himself of immortality. He called to his friends in earnest tones, commanding them to have the

priests bring the holy sacrament to the nearest point possible, so that, since he could no longer nourish his body with earthly food, he might prepare his heart and soul with the vision of spiritual nourishment.

"This was done for the pious prince as speedily as possible. In the meantime, all the people of the towns and villages prayed for his salvation. And not in vain. For when Maximilian saw himself on this enormous mountain, deserted by all assistance save that of Almighty God, he heard a call not far away, and turning about saw an unknown youth in peasant garb making a path toward him by throwing down rocks. On arrival he held out his hand and said: 'Thanks, fair prince, to your piety and zeal, God strengthen and hold you, for he can and will release you. Therefore, lay fear aside and follow me, for I will bring you to safety.' Thereupon the prince came to himself and followed his guide.

"Safely down, he was received joyfully by his companions, and all their sorrow was turned to joy. But during this, his savior disappeared and was not found again. By imperial command a diligent and thorough search was made for him. But it was of no avail, and so he was thought to have been a guardian-angel, sent by God, to preserve the young prince from an all too early death, and to be of service to all Christendom by upholding the house of Austria. In remembrance of which the prince had a crucifix forty feet high erected, which from below looked scarcely two feet tall."

Was it peasant or angel who guided Maximilian? At castle Ambras is preserved the monstrance in which the Host was carried by the priests who offered up prayers for his deliverance. At some time between 1508 and 1513 Maximilian himself carried a crucifix to the cave in the Martinswand, while, in 1514, the eternal "hunters' candle" was lighted in the abbey of Wilten.

Once, near Hall, Theuerdank, without thinking, was on the verge of vaulting with his pole while at a great elevation, when the voice



of a huntsman brought him to realization of his mistake. This may be an early instance of the false move made under fatigue. The wind caught our hero once, as he was leaping down at the end of the day, and nearly overthrew him, but with great skill he placed the point of his pole in a cranny of the rock and prevented a severe fall. At another time a foothold in the rock gave way, but Theuerdank secured himself by grasping the branches of a small tree. No doubt he quickly learned that alpine *latschen* has strong roots. Shoe-spikes frequently proved his salvation. When his feet slipped on steep moss, he was saved by one iron prong which, though much bent, held him safe.

Theuerdank was familiar with avalanches, of which Hans Burgkmair's engraving is the earliest depiction. Once while riding along the Inn Valley, near Hall, no fewer than three great balls (*Schnee-leen*) came crashing down. The horse starts back in fear and Theuerdank is unharmed, but the two flanking riders take not the slightest notice of the danger. The quaint picture of this adventure, modified, appeared again thirty years afterward in Johann Stumpf's *Swiss Chronicle*, on which Simler's *Vallesiae Descriptio* is based.

There is evidence that Theuerdank ventured on glaciers. The miniature in the *Jagdbuch*, in the Brussels library, shows hunters driving chamois over snow-clad mountains, some of the men walking along narrow crests, while others are in glissading attitudes. Theuerdank was at one time induced to ride across a frozen meadow by the promise of a castle full of voluptuous delights; and, though his horse fell heavily the rider was undamaged. In the Enns Valley Theuerdank once had a hairbreadth escape when snow balled in his climbing-irons. His footing gave way at once, but he clung with his hands to a point of crag until rescued. Finally, in Styria, he seems to have been about to cross a bit of glacial ice (*Schnee-rysen*), but cautiously sent a huntsman ahead, who fell, and Theuerdank went around by another and doubtless better way. By this time he had learned many lessons.

It is of interest that none of the hunting adventures are brought about by Neydelhart, the third captain, who represents the conflict with things more serious than sport. For allegorical Fürwittig and Unfalo we may substitute the hazards of athletic pursuits. In addition to the three captains, the figure of Ehrenhold, distinguished by a wheel-like device on his garments, appears in nearly all of the *Theuerdank* plates. He is never of the smallest use, but, according to Charlotte Young, possibly represents Fame or is akin to Don Quixote's literary sage. On the other hand one discovers this same wheel, in larger scale, on the *Weiss Kunig* plate depicting young Maximilian's initiation into the mysteries of natural science, and one is more inclined to believe that the artists of *Theuerdank* imply that Maximilian went out on his adventures protected by all the knowledge and skill available in his day. It is a method of approach not to be disdained by the modern mountaineer.

These adventures undoubtedly contain a thread of truth, and one must admit that Theuerdank knew from experience how to conduct himself with skill on mountain slopes. The portraits of Maximilian by Dürer, Holbein and Lucas van Leyden reveal a man of keen perception, and he, as Theuerdank, represents the height of mountaineering art as it existed at the end of the fifteenth century.

Though his dust lies beneath the altar in the distant church of Wiener Neustadt, the spirit of "Kaiser Max" still lives. One senses it in the hunting tapestries of the Louvre, in every forest and mountain group of the Eastern Alps, stretching from the *König's Schuss* of the Raxalpe near Reichenau to the ruined castles of the upper Inn. Something of that spirit yet lights the eyes of the young men and women, wandering in their heritage of beauty. Four centuries separate Maximilian I and Albert of the Belgians, but it is doubtful whether any ruler in the interval of years risked more, or adventured more gaily on high hills than this huntsman of the Renaissance.



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Many English mountaineers give brief but vivid fragments from the writings of Conrad Gesner. The desire for fuller acquaintance which these awaken in the reader has best been satisfied by consulting Coolidge's *Simler*, where a corrected Latin text is given on parallel pages with a French translation. The first editions of Gesner are not common, and we enjoyed them, with their justly famous "horrible abbreviations" only from photostatic copies, kindly made for us through the courtesy of W. W. Francis, of the William Osler Library, McGill University School of Medicine. Several colleagues entertained themselves translating the "*Admiration of Mountains*," and later Mrs. John I. Walter became interested in preparing an English version of these essays which she brought to the attention of H. B. D. Soulé. His translation was only slightly revised after comparing it with the published English fragments and with Coolidge's version in French, and its invaluable references and footnotes.

A timely word from Francis Farquhar sent us to Dr. Thorington for help in presenting the background of these essays, and to his enthusiastic response we owe the notes and the woodcuts.

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The editions of *Theuerdank* are as follows: the first and second appeared in 1517 and 1519; the third in 1537, the letter-press being converted into modern type. In the fourth edition, 1553, with text alterations by Burchhardt Waldis, there are new engravings in imitation of the old. This was reprinted in 1563, 1569 and 1596, these editions containing minor variations. The eighth edition, by Schultes, was brought out in 1679 (the writer's copy of this edition once belonged to Longfellow), and the ninth edition, 1693, differs but little from it. There are about forty known copies of the first edition printed on vellum. The Alpine plates are by the following artists: Beck-15, 37, 53, 55, 59, 62, 66; Burgkmair-22, 66, 71; Schaufelin-69; Unknown (B)-20.

Owing to the death of Maximilian I in 1519, and other vicissitudes, the first printing of *Weiss Kunig* did not take place until 1775, the original engraved blocks still being preserved in the Vienna Hofbibliothek. Plate 71 of *Theuerdank* should be compared with plate 75 of *Weiss Kunig*.

The discussion of "Ancient Crampons" is from *American Alpine Journal*, ii, 266.

J. M. T.

## THE ILLUSTRATIONS

page 7

Theuerdank's climbing-irons become wedged in the rocks, and he would have perished had not assistance arrived.

page 10

Theuerdank, on the Martinswand, spears chamois before the assembled court.

page 13

Theuerdank slips when snow clogs his climbing-irons, and would have fallen to his death had not God preserved him.

page 22

Three avalanches shoot down from the mountain, but Theuerdank, hearing the roar, saves himself by reining in his horse.

page 25

Theuerdank is endangered by a gale which lifts him into the air, but he is able to catch himself in the rocks.

page 27

Theuerdank slips on a mossy slope, and his life is saved by a single prong of the climbing-irons which holds although much bent.

page 31

Theuerdank, taken up a lofty mountain to cross a snow slope, sends over a huntsman, who falls, and Theuerdank continues by another route.

page 34

How a chamois, after being shot, would have thrown Theuerdank from a precipice had it not caught on a projecting rock.

These illustrations are from plates 15, 20, 22, 36, 56, 62, 66, and 71 in the early editions of *Theurdanckh*.



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