Walks in Snowdonia

By the EDITOR.

RATIONS are the order of the day. Our mountain climbs have reached their shortest span. Perhaps some day it may be of interest to know that a mountaineer's hill holiday of 1916 consisted of two days. What was the best one could do? I decided: 'Begin my climb at sea-level.'

Many years ago I had spent a day with a friend in an attempt to go from Llanfairfechan over Foel Fras and Carnedd Llewelyn to Llynn Ogwen. We reached Foel Fras, but then a heavy storm of wind and rain came on to which very soon a thick fog added itself. We must have gone a long way out of our course for the fog was thick; but at last a sudden break in the clouds showed us—deep down—a valley on our right. I had always thought we had descended between Carnedd Llewelyn and Carnedd Dafydd, but last summer it became clear to me (after passing Foel Grach) that we had really gone down between Foel Grach and Carnedd Llewelyn. When the valley showed itself we made a rush for the descent, and though the clouds closed over us again we lost little time in reaching Bethesda—drenched to the skin—as I have never been drenched elsewhere except in the Caucasus when coming down from Basardusi to the accompaniment of the loudest thunder and the fiercest lightning. There was a stream from the sleeves of our coats when we took them off sufficient to set a small water-wheel in motion. Truth relies upon the adjective.

How was I to begin my day from sea-level? By starting from Aber, to cross Foel Grach, Carnedd Llewelyn, and Carnedd Dafydd to Llyn Ogwen. The heights above Aber waterfall I had often explored, and come very near to trouble upon them by getting up a gully which flattened out to nothing on the face of the hill. Just before sunset, on August 28, 1916, at Aber, the combination of sea and mountain and glorious light was perfect. Aber, notwithstanding the inrush of tourists in the middle of the day, is a haunt of ancient peace in the early morning and late evening, like many spots in the Alps which will at once occur to my readers.

The guide-books have not very much to say about Aber; they all recall the story of Llewelyn and his bride Joan, the daughter of King John. Llewelyn had taken prisoner William de Breos, 'a powerful baron of handsome parts and presence.' John's penchant for lawless amours seems to have descended to his daughter, for she fell in love with her husband's prisoner—sympathy for the handsome captive being stimulated by the 'call of the blood,' as a modern

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novelist would phrase it. Llewelyn's father-in-law would doubtless have appreciated his son-in-law's method of getting rid of his wife's paramour, for cunning and cruelty were his own favourite weapons, and his son-in-law was an adept in their employment. After De Breos had been ransomed he was 'invited to Aber under the guise of friendship, and there treacherously hanged upon a gallows erected below the castle.' Llewelyn having previously asked his wife what she would give for a sight of De Breos, to which she answered, 'in a Welsh distich':

'Wales and England and Llewelyn
I'd freely give to see my William,'

showed her from a window of the castle the dead body of her leman suspended from the gallows-tree. The castle of Llewelyn has vanished, and if any ghosts haunt the spot they do not show themselves to the Saxon.

The garden at the corner where the road from the station joins the Bangor highway has a delightfully old-world appearance. The mossed apple-trees attracted me much, their fruit more; but they stood back from the road, and were as much denied to the virtuous as kisses on lips that are for others.

So, with mild regret, I went on, and passing to the right of the church and turning my back to the sea, found myself on the fern-clad hillside. There was a track which I followed for some distance, and then I plunged through tall and thick fern down to a green secluded hollow on the right of the western Aber waterfall. To my surprise and relief the fern was fairly dry. I then continued—rather out of my way—to Bera Mawr and afterwards round Bera Bach and Yr-Aryg till I got the western view over Bethesda. Below me was the hollow of Afon Caseg and the striking rocks of Yr-Elen, a real Alpine peak in miniature. Then I turned S. to Foel Grach. Before I reached it I met a shepherd waiting for his mates who had gone to round up sheep. Conversation was not too easy, but I learnt the abilities of his dog and how sheep had risen in price. I ate my frugal lunch on Foel Grach and then passed on to Carnedd Llewelyn. The views were good, but the Black Ladders pleased me best.

I went on to Carnedd Dafydd and so to his outlier or shoulder above Llyn Ogwen. Thence I struck down diagonally to the farm at the end of the Llyn, with Trifaen and the Cirque above Llyn Idwal to satisfy the gaze even of the most enthusiastic and exacting mountaineer. My worst trouble was a high wall near the bottom of the slope, but at a carefully chosen spot I got over it without bringing down any stones, though they seemed ready to break into an avalanche on the smallest provocation. So to Ogwen cottage for tea, and then to Bethesda, where I caught the last train to Bangor, but only by running the last few yards. When I regained Aber I thought myself fortunate to have had so fine a day. Next morning

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was wet, and only in the afternoon did the weather clear sufficiently to allow me to go up the valley to the Falls. The next day saw me back in York.

So much for my ration of hill-climbing in 1916.

On August 31, 1917, on arriving at Port Madoc Station, I had the good luck to meet the motor from the Royal Goat, and a warm welcome from Mr. Pullan. The weather was beautiful, and the ride to Beddgelert charming. Cynicht was a great sight, almost worthy to be the begetter of Shelley's

'Keen pyramid with wedge sublime.'

Seen, indeed, in such a light and such a glory of sunshine by Shelley when he was living at Tanyrallt (the site of which my companion pointed out to me), may he not 'have crept into his study of imagination' to suggest on a later day the line from 'Adonais' quoted above? Moelwyn too displayed his pristine attractions, and the woods bordering the road suggested the natural path to the quiet retreat of which I was in search. Never were the charms of the peaceful vale beneath Moel Hebog more satisfying, but to parody—

'Beddgelert saw another sight
When the rain fell ere dead of night'—

such rain as seldom pours down even in Snowdonia. The weather's angry mood lasted through the next day.

September 2 saw some improvement, and a large party started for Moel Hebog. All duly reached the top, and then with two enthusiasts I set off down the slope between Hebog and its neighbour, a mountain without a name on the map. I have since learnt from Mr. Pullan that it is known as Moel Ogof: Ogof being the name of an outlaw—less famous but apparently of the same shadowy reality as another hero of the neighbourhood—who made his abode in a cave on the mountain, and was doubtless as much the shame and dread of Beddgelert as Cacus was of the Aventine Hill in Roman legend. We traversed Moel Ogof, finding one quite considerable gash in the rocks cut clean as if by quarrymen, then descended to the gap between Ogof and Moel Lefain, and ascended the latter. After that we went down to the next Bwlch, finding a little more trouble though no real difficulty about our route.

Later again ascending we reached a spot where in misty weather an inexperienced wanderer might easily come to destruction. Suddenly from the meagre grass of rough rocks a precipice plunged a good hundred feet to the bottom of a quarry. Here we had before us one of those places which make wandering in the mist on the N. Wales mountains so perilous. One step finds the solid rock, the next a headlong pitch to death. Having reached a suitable eminence in the broken country between our last peak and Trum-y-Ddysgl, we stayed to eat our lunch.

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Meantime Carnedd Goch, across a valley to the W., with the self-asserting rocks of Craig Cwm on his right, attracted our attention and admiration, both for his mass and form. Afterwards we went up the easy slopes of Trum-y-Ddysgl—slopes so easy that even the tender-personed maiden who invited the hero of 'Excelsior' to stay and rest, with the offer of a charming pillow, might have walked up without a tremor. After that we passed to Y Garn, and on the way enjoyed an unexpected sight of subdued but impressive splendour in the wonderful colour that clothed the cliffs of Y Garn from top to bottom. No Eastern loom ever more deftly mixed green, gold, and warm brown. The general effect was so striking that we all stopped suddenly, so imperiously did it hold our eyes. When we reached the top of Y Garn I got over the edge of the cliff, which was nothing like as steep as it looked when we first saw it, to discover the ingredients of this wonderful colouring. Roughly speaking, it was composed of very dwarf whortleberry and cranberry, ferns, and a groundwork of thick mosses. We afterwards perceived, when on Mynydd Mawr, that the opposite slope of Trum-y-Ddysgl was similarly coloured. At what appeared to us the foot of the slope between these two mountains was green meadow, where falls of stones had spread regularly into perfect fans running out into the grass. When on Mynydd Mawr we saw that this cwm was a long way above the Nantlle Valley.

Having thus secured our quintet of mountains, we descended steep grass slopes to a track that led us into the Carnarvon road, a little more than two miles from Beddgelert. Aran, gloomy as night and standing up in a massive wedge, was particularly impressive. We thought him as fine as Cynicht, even when the latter shows himself to most advantage. We got to the Royal Goat at 7.45, having started at 11.30 or thereabouts, after a day which none of us will soon forget.

On September 3 the motor took us to Penygwryd, but it was a day of mist and fine rain, with an occasional brief lifting of the clouds and an infrequent gleam of watery sunshine. We got up Glyder Fawr with some trouble owing to the mist, but instead of going on to Glyder Fach as we had purposed, decided to descend. All that I remember of the day is an encounter with two travellers, one of whom was most anxious to give us advice, though almost every sentence he uttered betrayed his own entire ignorance of what he was talking about, and the marvellous size of occasional sheep silhouetted against the skyline in the mist. Tea at Penygwryd and the motor to Beddgelert closed the day. Mr. Pullan told me as we passed Llyn Gwynant that the owner of some of the land near it, when selling the trees on his estate, refused to include in the sale those near the lake lest the scenery should be spoiled. Whenever he walks beneath those trees may the birds be singing their sweetest and the sun light up the lake, whose beauties he has preserved for us!

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September 4 was given up to strolling about, to meadows on the left of the Colwyn river, where below the roadside and beyond a pasture yellow with *Hieraciums*, recalling Tennyson's field of charlock in the sudden sun, but of a deeper colour, was to be seen a butterfly on almost every purple-blue scabious, and as the flowers grew in broad patches the butterflies showed up as if they were holding a parade.

Here you narrow down your world to a black cow or two, a friendly sheep, a stream heard but not seen behind its screen of birch, ash, and dwarf oaks, with an occasional ornament in the shape of the orange-red berries of the mountain-ash.

September 5 we devoted to Mynydd Mawr, the big mountain on the W. side of Llyn Quellyn. The motor took us to Rhyd-ddu. Thence we passed by Llyn-y-Dywarchen and Bwlch Gylfin to the Nantlle Valley, and so to the foot of Craig-y-beri. We did not trouble to go round this rocky rampart but found a way up, having to use our hands only in one or two places—farther to our left it would have been less easy to get up, as the rocks were steeper and seemed very rotten. Jackdaws and hawks were common here. Afterwards the way was of the easiest. From the top we got a fine view of Carnarvon and the 'Menai Straits.' Yr-Eifl (the Rivals) with the sea, Moel Eilio, and the Snowdon Group showed up well. Carnedd Goch impressed us as it had done on September 2. As we walked home the views of Snowdon and Aran, owing to atmospheric effects, engrossed our attention. Later Moel Hebog did the same.

On September 7 the first thing I saw on rising was both peaks of Lliwedd in golden mist. This was to be our best day. The motor took us to the turn for Sir Watkin Wynn's chalet, and we then ascended Lliwedd without going round Craig Ddu, the ordinary route to Snowdon. We kept more to our right than was necessary, in order to get the views over the valley, though there was a good deal of mist, and a fine rain fell at intervals. Having passed over both points of Lliwedd we went by the ordinary path up Snowdon. As we reached the summit a train discharged its passengers, but they were quiet, unobtrusive people, probably a little depressed by an overcast sky, who, after a cursory inspection of as much of the view as was to be seen, devoted themselves to lunch. So did we too. Then we surveyed the world, now slowly breaking free from the mists and beginning to show itself to the sun, who graciously emerged from the clouds and shone upon us for the rest of the day. Then we descended part of the way by the usual Beddgelert route, turning off it to go down straight to Bwlch-Cwm-y-Llan, where one of the famous Penygwryd trio stood in the 'fight of mountain winds.' But we had no opportunity of repeating his experience, for the air was gentle and the sunshine mild. We then climbed Aran from the pass, and so descended along Craig Wen, as nearly as possible direct to Beddgelert. No obstacles hindered us except

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a big wall, but a black bull with his harem about him caused us a diversion—a little to his right. This was our best day.

On the 8th we went up Cynicht from a point a little W. of Tre-saethon. Clouds were many and low-lying, and rain often threatened and more often fell. We reached the top amongst the clouds. On our way back we made a mistake for swearing we would ne'er diverge from the right, we diverged and, beguiled by the mist, descended into Cwm Croeser (*i.e.* we had come down to the left of the ridge). We found ourselves in a lush green meadow beside a dark Cimmerian stream. We had no doubt as to where we were, our trouble was that there was no visible means of crossing the stream. Presently we hailed a man who could speak no English, but the eloquence of his waving hand and arm and something about Pont indicated that there was a bridge not far off to our right. At the end of a second meadow we found it, and then got into the old road which leads *via* Nanmor to Aberglaslyn. Dark and dreary was that afternoon. The rain was now coming down heavily, and when we reached the part of the road beyond Nanmor the wind increased the deluge by wildly shaking the branches above our heads, and so we found what in fine weather is a charming scene of woods and ferny hollows, a chill and watery vista of soaked vegetation and dripping trees. Five miles of walking through a heavy downpour brought us to Beddgelert sodden but unsaddened.

September 9 was warm, though the clouds lay low. I wandered on the Carnarvon road and marked how high the Colwyn had risen on the previous day. Five magpies wrangling and abusing one another among the berries of a mountain-ash which the wind had blown over were the only diverting sight of my walk.

September 10 saw the early departure of my pleasant friends at a very early hour of the morning to Carnarvon. My coat was still wet from the saturating rain of our day on Cynicht, but the loan of an old coat by the landlord—a really *venerabile donum*—supplied its place with ease and comfort. I determined to spend my last day on Moel Hebog. I went up by the usual route marked with the white stones. After the last little farm come a few mountain-ashes and weather-beaten thorns among the ferns, and then the bare mountain side. I kept well to the right, so as to examine the steep face of Hebog which fronts towards the E.—I mean the cliff under the great shoulder on your right as you go up. A solitary sheep was grazing on it in what seemed decidedly difficult country. I watched him for some minutes; he divided his time between cropping the scattered tufts of herbage and apparently studying the ground with some trepidation: at last he reached a place where a decision had to be made. After pausing and looking at it he gave a cheerful jump and succeeded in rescuing himself, much to my relief. Never but once have I seen a sheep actually fall down rocks. That was above the Aber Falls, the poor creature

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broke a leg and was carried away on the shepherd's shoulders. As I looked from the summit there shot a sun-born radiance across the yellow sands and shimmering sea, and drew my eyes to the dim distance where Cader Idris reigned supreme. I came down much farther to the W. than usual and loitered often.

As one looks at Beddgelert in descending from Moel Hebog it appears quite a large village, carefully sheltered with little woods and clumps of trees. The small fields of corn reminded me of the plots on steep slopes high up in Italian Alps. The meadows are of a very rich green. I was surprised at the excellence of the grass, but I discovered when talking to Mr. Pullan in the evening that some of the richest herbage was not unbeholden to basic slag. The valley towards Llyn Ddinas unfolds itself graciously in the sunshine, and far behind it Moel Siabod reveals his huge mass, a mosaic of sunshine and cloud shadows. Lliwedd and Snowdon are superb, but Aran is sadly dwarfed against the former. Cynicht does not show well, but Moelwyn makes amends.

As I drew downwards it was pleasant to hear the insistent voices of the rivers in the valley. The harvest progresses apace. A good deal of corn has been cut to-day. Small farmhouses look snug in their little ring of trees. The scenery is quite sub-Alpine.

So with the sunlit softer scenery of Beddgelert itself as my closing memory, I brought my latest walk in Snowdonia to a conclusion, having summed up in a few short hours all the delights of the wind-beaten summit and the peaceful valley.

An Ascent of the Gross Löffler in 1862.

[DR. WILLIAM BRINTON (1823–1867), who made this expedition, was a well-known London physician, elected F.R.S. in 1864. He was one of the earliest Englishmen to visit Tirol, generally travelling alone. He is the author of articles on 'The German Alps' and 'The Ascent of the Gross Glockner' in 'P.P.G.' ii., while Mr. John Ball, in the preface to his 'Guide to the Eastern Alps,' expresses 'his special obligations' to him.

The present letter, by the good offices of Mr. A. O. Prickard, has been placed at the editor's disposal by Mr. and Miss Brinton, son and daughter of Dr. Brinton.]

Botzen, *August* 30, 1862.

On Monday it cleared a little, and I strolled up the Zillerthal, some eight miles from Zell to Mayrhofen, with the design

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