

## CADER IDRIS.

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It is a far cry from the Cairngorms to Mid Wales ; but the climber who loves the one region can hardly fail to be fascinated by the other. The Welsh hills, it is true, are not so lofty as Ben Muich Dhui and his neighbours, but, on the other hand, they can generally be depended upon to afford finer and more varied prospects. Cader Idris is not pre-eminent in height even among his Welsh compeers, though he *does* derive his name from a giant ; but for quality and style, if not for altitude, he can hold his own with the best of them. Cader (pronounce Cadder) Idris means the chair or seat of Idris, who, according to the Cymric legend, was a sort of Titan, combining the attributes of warrior and of sage. The summit can be reached by many routes, the most usual points from which the ascent is made being Barmouth (*via* Arthog), Towyn, and Dolgelly. When I paid my first—not, I trust, my last—visit thither, I decided to start from Dolgelly, and had no reason to repent my choice.

Dolgelly, the capital of Merionethshire, is assuredly one of the quaintest little towns to be found anywhere in these islands. The name is locally spelt Dolgelley or Dolgellau, and is pronounced Dolgetly, or, with a suspicion of the aspirate, Dolgethly. It nestles in a little basin among the hills, and its old-world houses are jumbled together in most picturesque disorder. There is nothing like a regular street in the place, and for windings, twists, and unexpected nooks and corners, it is only to be matched by the most characteristic specimens of our Scottish fishing villages.

Having spent the previous evening in rambling through this deliciously unconventional little place, I started next morning to walk to Barmouth by way of the crest of Cader. There is an easy pony track to the summit, which is taken by the majority of tourists, and another, termed in the guide books the Aran route, which is recommended to more energetic pedestrians. The most direct and most sporting

ascent, however, from the Dolgelly side is that known as the Foxes' Path, and this last was the one I selected. The road from Dolgelly to Towyn is followed for a couple of miles or so to a small wayside inn, having behind it a solitary little loch called Llyn Gwernan. Here we quit the high-road, and turning sharp to the left follow a more or less distinct track through an undulating, hilly stretch of ground, not at all unlike the upper part of Glen Callater. A mile and a half of this, with a burn or two to cross, brings us to Llyn Gafr, a very small pool, and here the real climb commences. Bending now to the right, an ascent of some hundred yards, fairly steep, discloses to the view another lonely lochan, Llyn-y-Gader, a typical mountain tarn, lying at the foot of a bold, semicircular corrie, and reminding the north-country visitor forcibly, by its situation and surroundings, of the gloomy little sheet of water that gives its name to Lochnagar. The Foxes' Path proper starts near the edge of this tarn, and to the eye is merely a streak of lighter yellow in the left or north-eastern segment of the corrie. There is no path in the strict sense of the word, nothing more than a sort of hollow in the scree; and the thousand feet or thereby to the summit forms a rather fatiguing scramble, as the loose stones, lying as they do precisely at the angle of repose, give way under one's feet at every step. In spring, no doubt, this track forms the bed of a water-course, but the stones are not rounded or pebble-shaped, but flat and angular like fragments of rough tiles or slates.

Once at the top of the corrie, a very gentle ascent brings us to the cairn, whence, if the weather be at all clear, the view is magnificent. I was fortunate enough to enjoy a fine September day, cool and bright. Facing north, the gazer sees, just as it seems at his feet, the estuary of the Mawddach, while away in the distance lies the Snowdon range, the various peaks of which can readily be distinguished by the glass. To the right are the Arans, the highest point, Aran Mawddwy, being 2972 feet above sea level, 43 feet higher than Cader itself. Turning round to the south, we have a panorama of hill and valley as far as

the eye can reach, with the bulky mass of Plinlimmon, the cradle of five rivers, on the horizon. But it is the western view that is the glory of Cader; and in this respect the mountain bears a closer analogy to Ben Cruachan than to any of the Cairngorm range; and the prospect in some respects excels even that from Cruachan. The estuary of the Mawddach, as has been said, lies on the one hand; on the other, at a somewhat greater distance, is that of the Dovey; while all in front stretches the blue expanse of Cardigan Bay, with the Carnarvonshire coast framing the picture to the north, and Pwllheli sands shimmering far away in the sunlight. Here we might well linger contentedly a whole golden afternoon; but the declining sun warns us that it is time to be once more on the move.

The easiest way down lies, in the first instance, rather to the south of west; but the most direct descent is right down the slope of Cyfrwy, the saddle of Cader, where, in the words of a recent tourist, there are "rocks, rocks, rocks, loose and rooted, living and dead, in millions and millions of tons, stone to pave all the cities of the world, lying about ready quarried". This, of course, is the exuberant outburst of the unsophisticated lowlander, unused to such scenes; but the ground is rugged enough nevertheless, for the stones and boulders are smaller and sharper than those, say, on the upper slopes of Ben Muich Dhui. Arrived at the foot of the declivity, we begin gradually to ascend again over a stretch of green turf forming the eastern shoulder of Tyrau Mawr, a summit bearing to Cader Idris very much the same relation that Cairn Taggart does to Lochnagar. Tyrau Mawr, however, on the northern side, has rather imposing corries and precipices of its own, from the edge of which the view is, if anything, finer even than from the top of Cader. Here we may profitably recline for half an hour on the grassy sward, and survey at leisure the glorious prospect of mountain, sea, and river, stretched out around and below.

The descent to Capel Arthog may be taken either very gradually, or at as steep an angle as is found convenient. Arthog Hall Hotel, which nestles among trees at the foot,

seems at first glance more like a private country house than an inn ; but welcome refreshment can be had there for all that, and a pleasant spot it must be to reside at for a summer holiday. The writer, after expressing this conviction, ventured to remark to the bright and decidedly intellectual-looking daughter of the Principality who was in charge, that, charming as it was in the summer months, Arthog was probably rather bleak and dull in winter. "Not a bit of it", came the quick reply. "We have a lovely winter climate here ; sometimes we have roses growing in the open air at Christmas. No, *not* Christmas roses either". There is a little railway station at Arthog, and a train coming up opportunely, I availed myself of it for the short run of two and a half miles to Barmouth.

Barmouth, or Abermawddach, to give it its full Welsh title, is a delightful little watering-place, which is rapidly coming into prominence as a fashionable resort. The houses, tier on tier above one another, seem hewn out of the steep hill which rises abruptly behind the town ; and there is a magnificent sandy beach. "The Riviera of the United Kingdom", the inhabitants fondly call Barmouth, and it is not wholly unworthy of the comparison. Of the various attractions it possesses this is not the place to speak, but reference may be permitted to its crowning and particular boast — the railway viaduct and passenger promenade stretching for half a mile across the mouth of the Mawddach firth, from which there is an exceptionally fine view up the river on the one hand, and out to sea on the other. In the foreground, looking up, is a curiously serrated ridge, closely resembling in outline a cock's comb, while beyond to the right rises the long ridge of Tyrau Mawr and Cader. I can confidently recommend any members of the Cairngorm Club, who may have the opportunity, to pay a visit to this part of Wales. They will not find any heroic climbing, but for varied natural beauties the district can hardly be surpassed by any in the kingdom.