

A WEEK-END IN SNOWDONIA.

BY WILLIAM BARCLAY.

IT was just after my first winter in England that the advent of spring, and the bright sunny days, brought on a bad attack of that "longing for the hills" so familiar to all true lovers of the mountains. No one, save those who have been brought up among them, or have served a long apprenticeship in their vast solitudes, toiling up the steep heathery slopes, or fighting one's way along the narrow, wind-swept ridges, can understand what a power this "spirit of the wild" is in the life of the individual; a presence that is always with him, always felt, and which at times breaks out into a raging fever the temperature of which will not be reduced till he has made a journey to their sacred precincts. As for ourselves, we have fortunately always been able to satisfy the longing by periodic visits to some mountainous district—be it either Scottish, English or Welsh. The following is an account of one such week-end among the larger hills of North Wales: the small slate village of Llanberis, conveniently situated for all the big mountains, was chosen as our centre.

We arrived on the Saturday evening, and after tea had a preliminary walk to the summit of Elidyr Fawr (3029 feet), and from there passed on to Y Garn (3104 feet) about a mile distant. These mountains, rising on the opposite side of the glen to Snowdon, and separated only by the deep pass of Llanberis, afforded an uninterrupted view of the giant, and materially assisted us in forming our plans for the morrow. It is on the slopes of Elidyr Fawr that the largest of the Llanberis slate quarries is to be found, and seen from a distance, or from the opposite side of the glen for that matter, the whole hillside appears as one giant staircase, the steps being the different

terraces where the work of excavation is going on. And if any Alpine enthusiast is anxious to expend some of his surplus energy, he could not do better than start on any of the immense mounds of slaty rubbish that abound hereabouts, and we guarantee him good "sport."

We did not make a very early start on the morrow, but by ten o'clock might have been seen quietly stealing out of the village. By then, the sun was out in all his glory, with every promise of a perfect day, and as we lightly stepped up towards the "pass," the mountains themselves gave us a smiling welcome. Our programme was the ascent of Snowdon by the "difficult and dangerous" Crib Goch Ridge, one of the long arms of the mountain, so as we neared the summit of Llanberis pass, we left the road and struck over the moorland for the northern extremity of this magnificent ridge. The Crib Goch terminates abruptly in a perpendicular wall of rock, but we rounded this to the east, and after some scrambling up scree- and grass-covered slopes we found ourselves on the back of it. Our route now stretched in front of us, in the shape of a large inverted S, right round to the main peak of Snowdon; to the right was the large corrie streaked with patches of snow, while on our left we could look down the beautiful vale of Nant y Gwryd as far as Capel Curig. The slope immediately in front though not steep was sufficiently disagreeable with the small sharp scree which covered it, but once beyond this the ridge narrowed considerably. We were now at a fairly good height, and looking down on either side could see parties, all over the hillside like so many flies—a most extraordinary sight to one who had only been used to solitary tramps among the lone hills of the "north Countree."

The ridge had now got so narrow that we could sit astride on it—a rather sensational position, as on the right it fell in great precipices for well nigh 500 feet, and to the left, in a slope of broken rock and scree, almost equally steep, to the little Llyn Llydaw. We

stood by the small cairn (3023 feet) on the summit of Crib Goch at one o'clock; after this, the route, still very narrow, bent to the right, and led to another top only a short distance away.

The whole eastern face of Snowdon was now in view, from the dark green waters of the little Glaslyn, under its precipices, up through the snow-filled gullies to the little wooden hotel perched rather insecurely on its summit. Though there was little room for it, the camera was unpacked and set up, being pointed first at Snowdon, and then backwards over the Crib Goch, and just at the moment of exposure a couple of figures suddenly stepped up to the cairn and were duly recorded on the plate. We had now a steep descent to the col, where we had some lunch and a lounge; then we continued our way upward towards the next point on the ridge—Crib-y-Ddysgyl (3500 feet). Passing over this top we soon joined the path and railway line coming up from Llanberis, and in a few minutes more stood on the summit of Wales (3560 feet), of almost equal height with our own dear Schiehallion—alike, but ah! how different. There is a cairn—a fairly large one too—but the summit area is almost wholly occupied by the refreshment room and its outhouses. We patronised the premises, and found the charges fairly moderate, considering the site. Then after we had explored every nook and corner, and Mac had climbed to the top of the cairn, we turned our faces homeward, and descended by the path to Llanberis.

The next morning was still good, though there was mist on the higher summits. After breakfast we set off for the Glyders—twin mountains, just across the pass from Snowdon. While trudging up the glen we were nearly frizzled up with the heat, but as we ascended we noticed that the mist was very low on the giant opposite, and long before we reached our own summit we were into it. We left the road about a mile beyond Old Llanberis, and followed the course of the Afon Las to its source in Llyn y Cwm; from

here it was a very short ascent to the plateau, and then an easy walk over boulders to the cairn of Glyder Fawr (3279 feet). We stayed a short time here, and as there was no sign of the mist clearing, we set our faces eastward for the twin Glyder Fach. After about a quarter of an hour's groping about in the gloom we reached the top, and found it to be much the finer of the two, as the summit was crowned with a host of fine rocky needles, over which we had to scramble. Our only regret was that we could not employ the camera, though we waited for nearly an hour on the off chance of the mist clearing. While perched on the top of the highest pinnacle, we heard a party moving about in the gloom beneath us, and later on, when returning to the higher top, we overtook them—wandering. We put them right and then descended to the pass, and so reached Llanberis.

Taking it all round we enjoyed our week-end immensely, certainly much better than we expected for a mountain holiday south of the Tweed. What struck us most in contrast to our own Scottish hills, was the number of people out; nowhere on any of the Highland mountains—excepting Ben Nevis—have we ever met more than two parties on any one day, and we have had a fairly wide experience; while here—why the hillsides were literally alive with people. But of course this is easily explained, as the climbing ground is limited, and the climbers are far more numerous than in Scotland.