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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ON CAMBRIAN AND CUMBRIAN HILLS: PILGRIMAGES TO SNOWDON AND SCAFELL ***

ON CAMBRIAN AND CUMBRIAN HILLS

First Edition	*1908*
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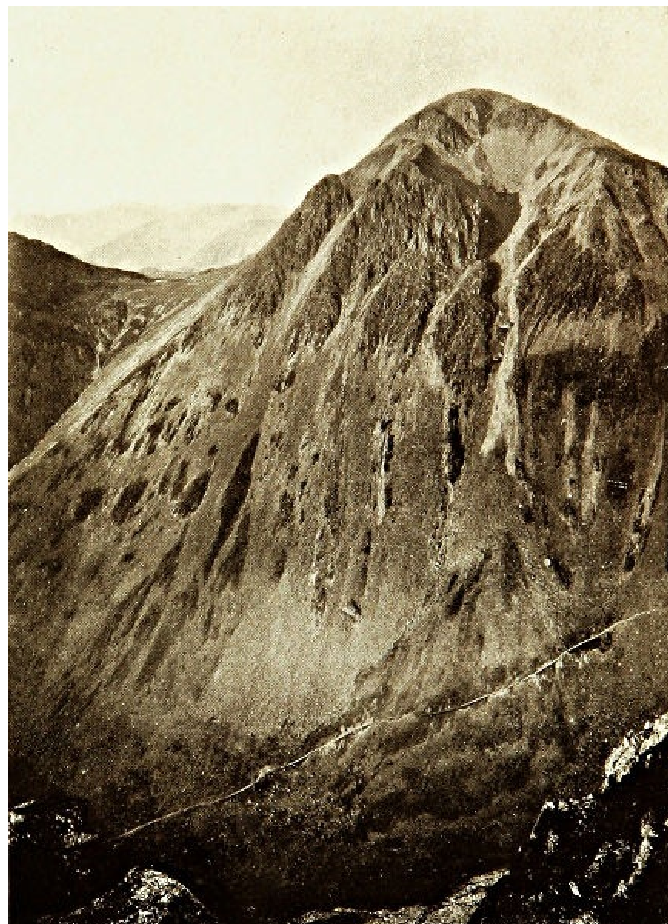

Frontispiece] [*G. P. Abraham, Keswick.*

THE GREAT GABLE.

ON CAMBRIAN AND
CUMBRIAN HILLS

PILGRIMAGES TO SNOWDON
AND SCAFELL

By

HENRY S. SALT

(REVISED EDITION)

London: C. W. DANIEL, LTD.
GRAHAM HOUSE, TUDOR STREET, E.C.4

To C. L. S.

I send thee, love, this upland flower I found,
While wandering lonely with o'erclouded heart,
Hid in a grey recess of rocky ground
Among the misty mountains far apart;
And there I heard the wild wind's luring sound,
Which whoso trusts, is healed of earthborn care,
And watched the lofty ridges loom around,
Yet yearned in vain their secret faith to share.
When lo! the sudden sunlight, sparkling keen,
Poured full upon the vales the glorious day,
And bared the abiding mountain-tops serene,
And swept the shifting vapour-wreaths away:—
Then with the hills' true heart my heart beat true,
Heavens opened, cloud-thoughts vanished, and I knew.

1879.

Preface to First Edition

Books about British mountains are mostly of two kinds, the popular, written for the tourist, and the technical, written by the rock-climber. The author of this little study of the hills of Carnarvonshire and Cumberland is aware that it cannot claim acceptance under either of those heads, lacking as it does both the usefulness of the general "guide," and the thrill of the cragsman's adventure: he publishes it, nevertheless, as at least a true expression of the love which our mountains can inspire, and he will be content if it meets, here and there, with some friendly "pilgrims" whose sympathies are akin to his own.

Nor is he without hope that his plea for the preservation of Snowdon and other mountain "sanctuaries," before they are utterly disfigured, may give a much-needed warning while yet there is time.

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ON CAMBRIAN AND CUMBRIAN HILLS

I
Pilgrims of the Mountain

The pilgrimages of which I write are not made in Switzerland; my theme is a homelier and more humble one. Yet it is a mistake to think that to see great or at least real mountains it is necessary to go abroad; for the effect of highland scenery is not a matter of mere height, but is due far more to shapeliness than to size. There is no lack of British Alps within our reach, if we know how to regard them; as, for instance, the gloomily impressive Coolins of Skye, the granite peaks of Arran, or, to come at once to the subject of this book, the mountains of Carnarvonshire and Cumberland.

For small and simple as are these Cambrian and Cumbrian hills of ours, when compared with the exceeding grandeur and vast complexities of the Swiss Alps or the Pyrenees, they are nevertheless gifted with the essential features of true mountains—with ridge and precipice, cloud and mist, wind and storm, tarn and torrent; nor are snow and ice wanting to complete the picture in winter-time. Why, then, with this native wealth within our shores, must we all be carried oversea to climb Alps with guides, when without guides, and at far less cost of time and money, we may have the same mountain visions, and hear the same mountain voices at home? A few of us, at least, will refuse to bow the knee in this fetish-worship of “going abroad”; for the benefit of going abroad depends mainly on person, temper, and circumstance; and to some mountain lovers a lifelong intimacy with their own hills is more fruitful than any foreign excursions can be.

For my part, I like to do my distant mountaineering by means of books. If I wish, for example, to see the Sierra Nevada of the West, can I not do so in Muir’s *Mountains of California*, a book scarcely less real and life-giving than the heights by which it is inspired—far more so than any superficial visit in the weary rôle of tourist? And then, if the mood takes me, I know where to find and enjoy a Sierra Nevada of our own; for is not Snowdon, is not Scafell, too, a Sierra Nevada during half the months of the year?

My pilgrims, then, are pilgrims to the less lofty, but not less worthy shrines of Lakeland and Wales; and nowhere do we see more clearly than in these districts the startling change that has come over the relations between Mountain and Man. When Gilpin visited Derwentwater in 1786, he quoted with approval the remark of an “ingenious person” who, on seeing the lake, cried out, “Here is Beauty indeed, Beauty lying in the lap of Horrour!” and in like spirit Thomas Pennant, in his *Tours in North Wales*, described the shore of Llyn Idwal as “a fit place to inspire murderous thoughts, environed with horrible precipices.” Then gradually the sense of beauty displaced the sense of “horrour,” and awe was melted into admiration; though still, to a quite recent time, we see reflected in the literature of our British mountains the belief that to ascend them was a perilous feat not to be lightly undertaken. Thus we read of a traveller who, having inquired of his host at Pen-y-Gwryd whether he might venture to ascend Snowdon without a guide, was dissuaded from such a headstrong attempt, which “would necessarily be attended with great risk”[1]; and another writer, in narrating his ascent by the easy Beddgelert ridge, some fifty years ago, exclaims with solemnity, “You *felt* that a false step would be fatal.”

But there were some pioneers, long before climbing became a fine art, who knew and loved the mountains too well to fear them. Take, for instance, the story—one of the most interesting in these early records—of the unknown clergyman who, about the middle of the last century, used to haunt the Welsh hills, and was “possessed with a most extraordinary mania for climbing.” It is delightful to read of the enthusiasm with which he engaged in his pursuit.

> His object was, to use his own expression, “to follow the sky-line” of every mountain he visited. For example, he would ascend Snowdon from Llanberis, but instead of following the beaten track he would take the edge of the mountain along the verge of the highest precipices, following what he called the “sky-line,” until he reached the summit; he would then descend the other side of the mountain toward Beddgelert, in a similar manner. He appeared to have no other object in climbing to the wild mountain-tops, than merely, as he said, to behold the wonderful works of the Almighty. In following the “sky-line,” no rocks, however rough, no precipices, unless perfectly inaccessible, ever daunted him. This singular mania, or hobby horse, he appears to have followed up for years, and continued with unabated ardour.[2]

That enthusiast, I am sure, was a true pilgrim, and it is to be regretted that his name is unrecorded.

People sometimes write as if these mountains were “discovered,” and first ascended, by English travellers, and as if the native dalesmen had known nothing of their own country before. Such statements can hardly be taken with seriousness, for it is evident that, as sheep were pastured on these hills from the earliest times, the shepherd must have long preceded the tourist as mountaineer. Thus we find Pennant, in his description of the “stupendous” ridges that surround Nant Ffrancon, remarking: “I have, from the depth beneath, seen the shepherds skipping from peak to peak; but the point of contact was so small that from this distance they seemed to my uplifted eyes like beings of another order, floating in the air.” To the shepherds, of

course, mountain climbing was not a sport but a business, and it would not have occurred to them to climb higher than was necessary; but who can doubt that, in the course of their daily rounds, the summits as well as the sides of the hills must have become known to them?

And if the tourist thinks the native cold and unimpressionable, what does the man who has been born and bred on the hills think of the man who comes on purpose to scramble there? It is difficult to say, so friendly yet inscrutable is his attitude; but I remember hearing from a shepherd in Wastdale, who had tended sheep on the Gable till every crag was familiar to him, a story which seemed to throw some light on his sentiments. He had been asked by a rock-climbing visitor, in the dearth of companions at the hotel, to join him in the ascent of a ridge where it would have been rash for one to go alone, and he did so; but, as he said to me, though he was always ready to go on the rocks to rescue a sheep, it did a bit puzzle him that the gentleman should wish to go there "for no reason." That, I suspect, is the underlying problem in the mind of the hillsman with respect to the amateur; but, of course, both interest and politeness prevent the free expression of it.[3]

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There are cases, however, where the mountain dwellers become themselves inspired with the love of climbing for climbing's sake. I was told of an inhabitant of Snowdonia who had been away in a lowland county for several years, and when at last he returned, and saw his beloved hill-tops again, could not satisfy his feelings until he had traversed, in one walk, the whole circuit of Snowdon, the Glyders, and the Carnedds, a distance of some thirty miles. Even when there is no such visible enthusiasm, we may feel assured that the mountains wield a real though subconscious influence upon their children.

It was not till the early 'eighties that the Alpinists discovered that there are fine gymnastic "problems" among the rocks of Wales and Cumberland, and the word went forth that every buttress and gully, every pinnacle and arête, were to be mastered; from which time onward the cry of the ambitious climber has been (like the cry of the religious devotee) *scando quia impossibile est*, with the result that the "impossible" has mostly become the accomplished. So that whereas, some twenty-five years ago, an ascent of the more precipitous ridges and rock-faces was a rare achievement, we now see the very hotel walls covered with pictures of "pillars" and "needles," with adventurous cragsmen perched in alarming postures on the verge, and the frivolities of visitors'-books interspersed with the grim seriousness of the climbers' records, telling in technical language how Messrs. So and So, "led" by Mr. Dash, surmounted some particular "pitch" (ominous term!) in Mr. Blank's gully—for every gully must now be named after its conqueror.[4]

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Let me not be misunderstood as wishing to depreciate in any way the craft of the climber, which, even apart from its great scientific and geographical value in the pioneering of Alps, Andes or Himalayas, and regarded merely as an athletic exercise, is one of the finest of sports; for which reason those who have long been familiar with the mountain life, though themselves not rock-climbers, will be the first to admire, and to envy, the marvellous skill which has carried men into places where, a quarter-century back, no one dreamed of venturing. But I would point out that there is another and still more important function of great mountains—the culture not of the athletic faculty alone, but of that intellectual sympathy with untamed and primitive Nature which our civilization threatens to destroy. A mountain is something more than a thing to climb. To the many who, on a fine summer day, swarm up Skiddaw or Snowdon by the well-worn pony-paths, it is pure holiday-making: to the few who (in another sense) swarm up Scafell Pinnacle or the Napes Needle, it is pure gymnastics; but between or beyond these two classes there are those—pilgrims I call them—who find in mountain climbing what only mountains can give, the contact with unsophisticated Nature, the opportunity to be alone, to be out of and above the world of ordinary life, to pass from the familiar sights and surroundings into a cloud-land of new shapes and sounds, where one feels the fascination of that undiscoverable secret (I do not know how else to name it) by which every true nature-lover is allured.

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Now, judging from the current literature of mountain climbing, one might suppose that mountains had no such secret at all—that they were mere fortuitous masses of rock-structure, formidable indeed to those unskilled in the cragsman's pastime, but supplying a ready playground for the expert. In the popular and less ambitious class of guide-book, written for the "tripper" who is deemed incapable of attaining an easy summit without instruction, and who is warned of the foolhardiness of deviating a yard from the appointed track, we do not of course look for any real appreciation of mountain character; but it is to be regretted that the same defect is scarcely less observable in the records of the new school of British rock-climbers, if we except the writings of its men of genius, such as the late Mr. Owen Glynne Jones, and a few others who might be mentioned. There are many fine cragsmen, it would seem, to whom the fells are little more than a gymnasium, and who cannot see the mountains for the rocks.

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A story told me by an artist who is a true lover of the mountains will illustrate what I mean. Returning to Wastdale Head one evening along the side of the lake in company with some climbers, while the seamed front of the Screes across the water was glorified by the setting sun, he pointed out to one of the party the splendour of the sight. "Yes," replied the gymnast, with a glance at the gullies, "you get a good look at number one and number two, don't you?" To *him* the illuminated mountain-side was just a line of numbered chimneys to scramble in; he had as much feeling for them as for the numbered bathing-machines on a seashore.

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Still less is there any real understanding of the mountains among the bulk of the tourists who rush through the districts and throng the hotels in the "season": of the motorists, of course, I need not speak. They will ask, no doubt, the usual well-worn questions—"Which is Snowdon?"

and "Where is Helvellyn?" and "Is that the top of Scafell?" but you quickly perceive that they are but jesting Pilates who do not wait for the answer; they may take coach-trips over the passes, and admire a show waterfall or two, but they see no more in the mountains than the panorama of the moment, an incident in the day's amusements of less import than their lunch.

Who, then, it may be asked, are the "pilgrims" of whom I speak? They are the small handful of enthusiasts whose concern with the mountains, as compared with that of the rock-climbers, is of a less venturesome but not less personal kind—devotees who have made it their pleasure to become intimately versed in the mountain lore, and to whom the numberless moods and phases of the hills are more familiarly known than to many expert cragsmen. To such solitary nature-lovers what name is more applicable than that of "pilgrims," a pilgrim, we are told, being one "who visits with religious intent, some place reputed to possess especial holiness"; and have we not the authority of a great poet for so using it?[5]

It is gratifying to me to be able to claim episcopal sanction for my own share, such as it is, in these mountain pilgrimages; for it was by a Bishop,[6] as renowned for his physical prowess as for his piety and learning, that I was first inducted to this work, and ordained (so to speak) in the high calling which I have followed, more or less faithfully, for over fifty years. It so chanced that, as a sixth-form boy in a great public school, I was sent in the summer holidays to act as tutor to a nephew of the Bishop, and the scene of our studies was a village on the Carnarvonshire coast, under the great northern spurs of Carnedd Llewelyn. With shame I must confess that both pupil and tutor preferred the allurements of the shore to the austerities of the heights; but the Bishop, muscular Christian and walker that he was, proud of traversing the length and breadth of his diocese on foot, was bent on finding his way—and what more troubled us, *our* way—to the little tarn, Llyn an Afon, which lies under the steep front of Y Foel Fras, itself a mountain of 3,000 feet; and in search of this lakelet we were "commandeered," much against our wishes, to march with the Bishop across the hills. Even now I see him, as he waved his stick encouragingly to us from some far headland, while we two boys lagged wearily behind, and wondered at the strange climbing propensities of bishops; and I remember that when an irreverent groan of "Oh, what a fool the Bishop is!" escaped from my pupil's lips, I inexcusably failed to reprove him. Little did I foresee that, though the task was so unwelcome to me at the moment, I was soon myself to be bitten with the same mountain madness, and that the image of Llyn an Afon, nestling under a semicircle of rocks at the head of its long pastoral valley, was to draw me back many and many a time, in later years, to revisit that lonely region. The Bishop himself would be flattered, perhaps, could he know that, as a result of that walk, one of his two laggards became a confirmed pilgrim, and has since made more ascents than he cares to confess of those Carnarvonshire mountains, and at all kinds of seasons.

For the notion, at one time widespread, and still by no means extinct, that these districts can be properly visited only in July and August is wholly erroneous. There is no doubt that in May and June the climate is usually at its best, and then most often occur those halcyon spells of sunshine which the drenched August holiday-maker is apt to regard as a myth; for the tourist waits till the wet weather has set in, and then has some hard things to say of the mountains' rudeness. The autumn, too, is often a goodly season for the climber, when the last torrential rains of August or September have sent the last disillusioned visitors to their homes; and even the winter-time, or early spring, as Southey, with other authorities, has pointed out, is far more fruitful than the late summer in those "goings on in heaven" which give an ever-shifting glory to the hills.

Eastertide is now a popular week among the mountains, but fifty years ago the hotels were practically empty at that season. I well remember how, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, I planned my first Easter visit to Cumberland, and was gravely warned by a learned Fellow of my College, the librarian, Henry Bradshaw, that it would be a very rash undertaking to go at that time, for "the passes," he said, "would not be open." He had in mind, possibly, a sentence in Gray's account of his trip to the Lake District in 1769, where it is stated of the gates of the Styhead Pass, at Seathwaite, that "all farther access is here barred to prying mortals, only there is a little path winding over the fells, and for some weeks in the year passable to the dalesmen; but the mountains know well that these innocent people will not reveal the mysteries of their ancient kingdom." If my monitor could now stand on the Styhead on a fine Easter Monday, he would see a sight to surprise him!

Nor is it strange that the mountains should attract their worshippers at all seasons of the year, for the passion, once acquired, is insatiable; you may tire of the hills for awhile, but if you have once felt their power you will assuredly return to them; and that perhaps is why we think of them as holding some inner secret of their own. Who that has sympathetically studied them will deny it? There are moments when, as we stand in the presence of a great mountain group, we are almost overwhelmingly conscious of the brooding watchfulness, the sphinx-like reserve and expectancy, with which these silent sentinels confront us. What is the source of the strong yet mysterious attraction that draws us again and again to these wildernesses of rock and cloud, this "builded desolation" which might seem so antagonistic to human sympathies? Why is it that we find even a humanizing influence in wastes where our grandfathers could see nothing but what repelled them as "savage" and "ferocious"? The charm that binds us is as inexplicable as it is real. If human love is "of the valley" and calls us down, there is another and wilder love that is of the mountain and calls us upward.

There are unfrequented ranges, such as the Eskdale side of Scafell, or the Aber side of Carnedd Llewelyn, where one may walk for twelve hours together without meeting a human being; indeed, the loneliness of the Welsh hills is now even greater than it used to be, since the "hafodtai," or upland farmsteads, where the herdsmen camped out during the summer months, have been

abandoned; and the present concentration of both tourists and climbers on certain favoured spots makes the silence all the deeper elsewhere. Thus it is that the pilgrim who is neither tyro nor expert, and therefore not dependent on the companionship of others, on account either of his own incapacity or of the arduous nature of his task, is able on the mountains to profit by a rare form of intercourse which, in the hurry and bustle of modern life, has become increasingly difficult; he can exchange ideas (if he has any) with *himself*. His surroundings are such as to quicken and foster such self-converse, not by the morbid introspection of the solitary—for, rightly regarded, there is no such thing as solitude among the hills—but by the liberating influence which these scenes exert both on the body and on the mind. [Pg 25]

Nor must it be supposed that there is any taint of moroseness or misanthropy in this mountain seclusion; the contrary, rather, is the case, and the human sympathies are perhaps all the stronger because they are not expressed but implied. Tender relationships need space to grow in, and the self-withdrawal which allows a fuller, because a freer view of them, does not lessen but rather fosters their tenderness, even as we may understand the hills themselves the better if we sometimes watch them from afar; and it is just this gift of space and freedom that we find in mountains as nowhere else. Therefore it is true, in Muir's words, that "the darkest scriptures of the mountains are illumined with bright passages of love that never fail to make themselves felt when one is alone."

[Pg 26] Again, if the mountains can teach us to feel more deeply, they can also help us more effectively to think. I have heard mountaineering deprecated by a learned scholar as having too much of the "animal" in it. The mountains certainly are not a thinking-shop; we do not go to them to follow a train of thought, or to solve a mathematical problem, but when we return from them we should be able to think the better, for in their company we have stood face to face with those great natural forces which are the best and most elemental educators of heart and mind alike. As Wordsworth's "Solitary" said of the "two huge peaks," that overlooked his hermitage:

> Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man
> Than the mute agents stirring there.

For, rightly spent, what we call "a day upon the mountains" is in truth an eight or ten hours' enfranchisement from a mortal obsession. Our chains fall from us—the small cramping chains of lifelong habit—and we go free. We awake out of the deadly torpor of our everyday "occupations," and we live. And excellent as is the physical exaltation of climbing—the toil and triumph of the ascent—there is also an intellectual and spiritual element in the mountain-passion, which can lift us out of ourselves, and show us, from a higher plane of feeling, as no mere book-knowledge can do, the true proportions and relations of things. One cannot walk in such regions, consciously, [Pg 27] without enlargement of thought. There are heights and valleys which, to those who seek them in a sympathetic spirit, are better "seats of learning" than any school or university in the land; there are days when the climber seems to rise into a rarer mental as well as visual atmosphere, and to leave far below him the crass cares and prejudices of commonplace life.[7]

In this sense the humanities of thought do not wither, but rather are fostered and strengthened, in the loneliness of the hills, and the hills themselves, when approached in a fit spirit, become a living inspiration, which enables us the better to know and value our fellow-beings of flesh and blood. "Would that I could give the world some clue to apprehend these strange weird companions of my life, in their higher teachings and ideals. Painters give them up in despair, as impossible, unrenderable; and they have yet to be described in their subtle powers of thought-giving and helpful teaching." So wrote to me a friend who had dwelt for many years [Pg 28] under the shadow of a mighty mountain range.[8]

Here, then, is the function of mountains in relation to human life. To every one there is opened (if he knows it) his own doorway for stepping out into space—for detaching himself for a time from the heavy environment of customary thought. To many it is music that furnishes this passport; to others poetry; to some few the philosophic reverie, or deliberate practice of the *yoga*. I have ventured to speak of mountain climbing in a similar relation, and to suggest that, in certain aspects, it is indeed a form of *ecstasy*, a standing above, and out of, oneself. The mind, no less than the body, has its Snowdons and its Helvellyns—its Crib Gochs and its Striding Edges—and when we climb them we may rise superior, not only to the visible landscape but to ourselves, and survey from a new vantage-point the low-lying flats and pastures, or shall we say the tablelands (too often literally so), of our own tastes and habits. How many astronomers are busily intent on surveying the Mountains of the Moon! And shall we not devote at least equal attention to these Mountains of the Mind, which are far nearer, clearer, and more real to us? Their secret, maybe, we shall never fully read; it is at least our privilege to have guessed at it.

[Pg 29] Thus it is that these our British highlands are sacred ground to some of us. We have gone on pilgrimage to them again and again, until the association has become, in a manner, a personal one; for there are instinctive sympathies with places as with people, and to many, as to myself, the connexion with certain mountains has been a deep and lasting influence. How many days, amounting to months and years of my life, have I spent in their company; and how often have I been keenly conscious of their presence, even when living far away from them in the din and dust of towns! Going back to these mountain shrines, after long and unwilling absence, we find that in heart we have never left them at all.

II
At the Shrine of Snowdon

It is commonly said that the approach to Snowdon begins at Capel Curig; but this is a very shortsighted and unimaginative way of regarding so rich an experience as a pilgrimage to the heart of Wales. To the true mountain lover, the approach begins at Euston Square. Yes, there, in the great busy station, when you have uttered the magic word, “Bettws-y-Coed,” and have received what looks like a mere railway ticket, but is, in fact, a passport to the enchanted fastnesses of the hills—from that moment, and all the day, as you glide swiftly through the broad fields of the Midlands, you see before you (if you are fitted to be a pilgrim at all) the distant ridges and cloud-capped peaks of Snowdonia, and hear the music of the streams.

For let it not be supposed that Capel Curig is, as other mountain hamlets are, a mere halting-place in the “circular tour” of North Wales. An old writer has called the place “an excellent inn in a desert,” but it is much more than that; it is an excellent desert round an inn. It is the special glory of the Capel that it lies, not in a sunken hollow, but on an open upland, some 700 feet above the sea, where the air, even at the hottest noontide, breathes crisp and bracing from the hills. The distance from Bettws-y-Coed is only five or six miles by road; in climate the difference is one that no mileage can express. From the low, moist woodlands you mount gradually up till you reach the point where the Llugwy river winds in a series of rocky falls round the base of Moel Siabod; then there is a bend, and yet another bend, in the valley, and you find yourself at St. Curig’s shrine. Great mountains are all around you, but there is a sense of space and freedom, with wild slopes of grass and rock stretching up and back to the higher ridges that lie behind. One is not oppressed, as so often in mountain districts, by the nearness of the overhanging heights.

By climbing one of the low hills that border the junction of the streams, you may learn the general features of the place at a glance. Facing westward, with your back to Bettws-y-Coed, you look into two bare, bleak, converging valleys, of which the southern is topped by the clear-cut peaks of Snowdon, the northern by the bulky range of Carnedd Llewelyn, while between them is the great mass of the Glyders. You are face to face with the wildest region of North Wales—a foreground of broad, marshy moorland, where you see little life but an occasional herd of black cattle, and a background of mountains that rise above 3,000 feet; yet the dreariness of the scene, so striking in its first impression, is relieved and varied, on fuller acquaintance, by the unsuspected tenderness that it enfolds. Simple and severe as the outlines are, there lies beneath them a wealth of loveliness that no intimacy can exhaust—lakes and mountain streams, unsurpassed for purity and freshness; secret nooks and lawns, and green terraces of turf, interspersed with grey crags and buttresses; and, crowning all, the great circle of mountains which for ever attracts and holds the eye without laying a burden on the mind.

Capel Curig, as a glance at the map will show, is the ideal centre for the exploration of Snowdonia, lying as it does at the junction of the two chief valleys, from which any of the mountain ranges may be approached; and there is in Capel Curig (for those who know it) the ideal cottage in which to spend a memorable fortnight among the hills. A more welcome resting-place, for one who loves a wild country, than this little home among the mountains, with the plash of streams and the cry of curlews all around, it would be difficult to imagine; but it is less as a resting-place than a starting-place that it is here referred to. Let it be supposed, therefore, that we have once more spent a night in the cottage, with the moon looking down on us from over the ridge of Siabod; that we have paid yet another morning visit to our bathing-place in the Llugwy, with the dipper and the grey wagtail flying up and down the stream, and that we are now starting out to make renewed acquaintance with the grim giants couched around.

The sense of severity and aloofness which haunts these mountains as compared with the Cumberland “fells,” is due chiefly no doubt to their sterner physical features, and to the greater depth and bleakness of the bare valleys which intersect them, each group of peaks rising apart, like a mountain system of its own; but we Saxon visitors are also moved, perhaps, by a feeling of racial strangeness in a land which has no interpreter for us—no literary associations such as those by which the English lakes are endeared—nothing but a dim record of earlier inhabitants, with wild tales of battles and feuds, soldiers and banditti, insurrections and invasions, now alike buried in the past. We seem to be looking on savage mountains in a foreign land. For me at least the first impression of “angry grandeur” in the Welsh mountains[9] has never been wholly obliterated by the intimacy of years, and has lent an unfailing zest to my walks. I can still recall the youthful eagerness with which, after my first ascent of Snowdon with a College friend, we set off, then and there, to toil from Pen-y-Gwryd up the long ridge of Moel Siabod; and how on a later occasion, after crossing Snowdon to Beddgelert, I was not satisfied until I had stood on the opposite crest of Moel Hebog in the afternoon. There must assuredly be some strong attraction about the mountains that can draw one, even in the fervour of boyhood, to pay them double homage such as this.

Next to the fact that they fall into the three great groups of Snowdon, the Glyders and the Carnedds—with Moel Siabod, and the heathery moorlands that link it to Cynicht and Moelwyn, forming a boundary on the south-east—the first point that strikes the watcher of these stimulating heights is that they offer, for the most part, a precipitous face on their northern or eastern fronts, while to the south and west they sink less formidably, though often with great steepness, to their dividing “bwlchs.” This structure is very marked in the central range of the Glyders,[10] where for four miles around the head of Nant Ffrancon the great escarpment looks

down on the waters of Llyn Ogwen; on the south there is but a formless steep of intermingled heather and rock, so that it would be surprising that strangers should be instructed to ascend the mountain from that quarter, if the art of climbing—that is, of selecting the routes that yield the greatest satisfaction to the climber—were not so entirely overlooked. [Pg 35]

To understand the Glyders, therefore, it is from Ogwen that we must start, that beautiful dark lake which lies, a thousand feet above sea-level, in the great mountain basin from which Nant Ffrancon descends—

Where all is rocks at random thrown,
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone.

There is much truth in the remark made sixty years ago by Mr. C. F. Cliffe that "there are few parts of these isles in which elemental effects may be seen, or heard, to such advantage as in this enormous valley, enclosed on nearly three sides; Aeolus sports here to his heart's content"; for owing to the sharp northward bend which the glen takes at the foot of Llyn Ogwen, the play of wind and cloud in this boisterous amphitheatre is often a wonderful sight. Looking southward from this point, we have above us the beetling front of the Glyders, and by striking up the spur known locally as the Gribin, with Llyn Idwal on its right and Llyn Bochlwyd on its left, we gain a natural causeway, at first broad and bulky, then narrowing to a knife-edge, which leads us through the heart of the mountain, with intoxicating sights on either side, to the high plateau between the Glyder Fawr and the Glyder Fach. Across Cwm Bochlwyd, as we ascend, rises the great mountain tower of Tryfan, which, since the outrage done to the majesty of Snowdon, is rivalled only by Crib Goch for the supreme honours of Welsh summits; on the other hand we see, above Llyn Idwal, the famous black rift in the mural precipice, known as the Devil's Kitchen, with its cataract of disgorged boulders streaking the slope below. Having reached the top of the Gribin, we pass at a step from our narrow staircase into an upper storey between the two summits of the Glyders, described in early guide-books as "the chilly mountainous flat"; nor to this day is there a spot that more often merits the name, though there are times, too, when it may serve rather as a basking-place in summer heat. From this pivot we have the whole mountain, with its wide prospects, at our command, and can either turn to the right toward the Glyder Fawr, and thence follow the sky-line over Y Garn to the Great Elidyr, the western buttress of the range, or walk leftward (which is by far the better course) to the Glyder Fach, from which we can cross the gap to Tryfan and descend by its precipitous northern ridge to our starting-place at Llyn Ogwen. [Pg 36]

The character of the Glyder itself is that of a wild stony desert, upbreaking here and there, as notably at its summit, into bristling "horns" and "pikes"—stacks and shafts of rock piled together in fantastic disarray—wonderful in all weathers, but most when the spell of cloud is upon them. Of many journeys across this mountain, I best remember those which were fought step by step against the storm, when the wind was so strong that one had to clutch at the crags to avoid being blown away, and the mist so thick that even the unforgotten rock figures—grotesque shapes of beasts and fowls and reptiles without name—were blurred and transformed, so that in the compass alone was there certainty;[11] but the fair days also are not less treasured in the mind when one could sit and watch the Ogwen stream, like the river in Mrs. Browning's poem, "flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea," or southward the glitter of Portmadoc Bay, hung like a picture in the sky, or far to the south-east the Berwyn Hills, and other distant and more distant ranges, covered with snow (I recall the wonders of one long-past winter afternoon) and gleaming like fire in the sunset. [Pg 37]

But it is to Tryfan, even more than to the Glyder Fach, that the heart of the pilgrim is drawn—that huge rocky bastion which juts out from the battlements of the main ridge, and has been the marvel of generations of travellers on the coach-road which it overhangs. Well might Pennant, looking across to it from the verge of the Glyder a hundred years before rock-climbing was thought of, feel dismayed at its frown! "In the midst of a vale far below," he wrote, "rises the singular mountain Trevaen, assuming on this side a pyramidal form, naked and very rugged. A precipice, from the summit of which I surveyed the strange scene, forbade my approach to examine the nature of its composition." There is no difficulty in approaching Tryfan from this side, indeed the very precipice of which Pennant spoke is now recommended by rock-climbers as a good training-place for beginners; but so formidable is the look of the mountain that until about forty years ago it was ascended by only one route, nor even now, when it has lost its former terrors, has it lost one jot of its impressiveness. After visiting Tryfan some scores of times, I still feel its attraction as strongly as when I first discovered it (for it comes to every mountain-lover as a discovery of his own), and I have sometimes thought that a summer might be well spent in making a thorough study of the peak, until one became familiar with the many unexplored recesses which the climber passes by, that labyrinth of cyclopean masonry—terraces and galleries, slabs and spires, turrets and gargoyles—with which it uprears itself, like the great cathedral that it is, to the two standing stones which form its crest. [Pg 38]

No hermitage certainly could be more sublime, for him who would dwell above the pomps and vanities of the world, than a nook in one of the rocky pent-houses or caverns that yawn along the sides of Tryfan; and such anchorite would at least enjoy the best natural observatory, and the finest mountain berries, that Carnarvonshire can produce. Plain living and high thinking might there be practised *in excelsis*. [Pg 39]

When we turn from the Glyders and Tryfan, still in their primitive state of utter wildness, to their great neighbour, Snowdon, scarred and maimed by copper-mine and steam-engine, the change is a striking one; it is like passing from a perfectly preserved work of art to some broken

monument, the torso of a giant form, in which we have to reconstruct from the beauty of what remains, the once exceeding splendour of the whole. Capel Curig, as I have said, is the point from which "Snowdon and all his sons" (to use Pennant's quaint expression) are best seen; to ascend from Llanberis and Beddgelert is to go up by a back staircase in neglect of the front one, a mistaken course at any time, and doubly so now that the summit has been spoiled, and the interest of the mountain in great part shifted to its attendant peaks, which rise on the Capel Curig side.

But crippled as Snowdon is, we may still find on it one incomparable excursion, the circuit of the great hollow of Cwm Dyli by the ridges of Lliwedd and Crib Goch, which, if we can shut our eyes to the abominations of slag-heap and railroad that must be passed on the way, will hold its own, even against the Glyder and Tryfan, as the grandest mountain walk in Wales. Lliwedd itself, [Pg 40] which rises so finely from the shores of Llyn Llydaw, is a beautiful object from every side but the south, and may be described as a sort of glorified Skiddaw—as if the Cumbrian hill, while losing none of the graceful lines and curves that distinguish it, had been cut down, on its front, from a mere steep of shale and heather into a mighty precipice. Along the edge of this rock-face, the haunt once of the wild goat, now of the cragsman, and over the twin peaks, with their bird's-eye views of Cwm Dyli and its two lakes on one side, and the lakeless Cwm Llan on the other, we have an ideal route to Snowdon.

Arrived *there*, what a scene awaits us, especially if the train has just steamed in with its latest freight of trippers! For consider on what ground it is that we stand—the very summit of the sacred hill, the shrine of Snowdon, once the pride and stronghold of the Cymry. Thus wrote the historian Camden, more than three centuries ago:

> We may very properly call these mountains the British Alps, for besides that they are the highest in all the island, they are also no less inaccessible by reason of the steepness of their rocks than the Alps themselves; and they all encompass one hill which, far exceeding the rest in height, does so tower its head aloft that it seems not merely to threaten the sky, but to thrust its summit into it. It harbours snow continually, being throughout the year covered with it, or rather with an aged crust of snow; hence the British name of 'Craig Eryri,' and the English "Snowdon." [Pg 41]

We smile at the hyperbole of these ancient writers, but even now, in these days of its utmost wrong, the natural sovereignty of Snowdon stands confessed; so truly imperial is its form, and so symmetrically do its superb ridges radiate from the parent peak. Its everlasting snow was a fable; but deep drifts may be seen as late as midsummer in its northern gullies, and in the winter months, when the zigzag tracks are deeply covered, it is often no easy matter, for any but trained climbers, to make the ascent from Capel Curig; there are times when the high cornice of snow, overlapping the brow of the ridge at the head of Cwm Dyli, offers a formidable barrier.

It was well that so noble a mountain, rich in legend and tradition, should continue to stir public sympathies[12] and draw pilgrims to its shrine; the pity is that the shrine itself should have been despoiled—not, be it noted, by the *number* of its votaries, which was great even before the [Pg 42] middle of the last century, when the mischief was still undone, but by the hideous "accommodation" provided for them. It would not have been difficult, with a little care and forethought, to build a mountain hut in a sheltered place a few feet below the top of the ridge, where it would have been practically unseen; unfortunately what was done, about seventy years ago, was to erect some unsightly buildings on the very summit, and these have lately been enlarged into the present Summit Hotel, of which it need only be said, as was said of the nose of a certain philosopher, that "language is not vituperatious enough to describe it." I never see the place without thinking longingly of the last scene in Poe's story, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, where a certain accursed mansion obligingly topples over and disappears in a neighbouring tarn; might it not be hoped, then, that on some wild winter night, when these buildings are untenanted, they would be blown by a south-west hurricane over the edge of Clogwyn Garnedd into the waters of Glaslyn below? But such wishes, however pious, are unavailing; to take a cup of tea in the refreshment-room, in preparation for the advance to Crib Goch, is the wiser course.

It is pleasant to exchange the crowded mart on Snowdon for the space and solitude of Carnedd Ugain, its high northern shoulder which overlooks the Llanberis side; but though solitude will [Pg 43] now be ours, space must soon begin to fail us, as the broad expanse dwindles and contracts to a mere rocky curtain. A glorious ridge it is that we enter on, which under the two names of Crib-y-Ddysgl and Crib Goch, but in reality one and indivisible, runs with hardly a break for a full mile eastward, with Cwm Dyli on the right, and the still greater depths of Cwm Glas and the Pass of Llanberis on the left, until, after dipping to the grassy saddle known as Bwlch Goch, it rises again to the famous Pinnacles, and then narrows in once again, and more acutely, to the two summits, at a height of 3,000 feet. Though the whole "Red Ridge" from end to end is narrow, and a passage along it is apt to bring to mind the Gendin Edge in *Peer Gynt*—

> Nigh on four miles long it stretches
> Sharp before you like a scythe—

it is to the eastern section of it, between and adjoining the two cairns, that the main interest belongs, and hither for years past all lovers of the Welsh hills have aspired. Yet owing doubtless to the fact that every one who has written of Crib Goch has written of it in the terms of his own powers as climber, and these powers vary immensely, it is by no means easy to obtain a clear and trustworthy idea of it from the published descriptions. The old writers, for the most part, spoke of it as a place of terror, where it was foolhardy to venture, and where the least slip would be fatal; [Pg 44] in the literature of the new school of rock-climbing, on the other hand it is treated like Striding

Edge on Helvellyn, or Sharp Edge on Saddleback, as just a pleasant scramble, and it is said to be a moot point among cragsmen whether they could pass along it with their hands tied. So differently does a mountain present itself, according to the capacity and confidence of the mountaineer!

I have heard the story of an ardent pilgrim, by no means a cragsman, who had once braced himself, with some misgivings, to the crossing of Crib Goch, and was just entering on the most awkward bit of the journey, when he was met by another traveller coming from the opposite end. Pleased to think that he was about to receive, in his straitened circumstances, a word of encouragement from a fellow-climber, he was startled by the stranger breaking out into an almost passionate reprobation of the perils of mountain edges in general and in particular of Crib Goch. “I am now a married man,” he cried, “and it is not right, it is not proper, for me to be here.” My friend felt that there was a lack of reason in addressing these remonstrances to *him*; but his own position, astride of a knife-edge, was not favourable for argument, and he was indeed so taken aback by the inauspicious character of the meeting that he sorrowfully renounced Crib Goch and retired the way he came.

In reality, though this “crib” offers no obstacle whatever to an active person who is quite free from giddiness, it is much narrower and more precipitous than any of the Cumberland “edges,” and for the ordinary climber, as distinct from the expert, needs to be taken with more care. Imagine yourself, reader, perched on the roof, so to speak, of a mountain—a colossal roof, some fifteen hundred feet above the valleys below, where for sparrow on housetop you have raven or buzzard—and, further, imagine the angle of this roof to be a ridge of spiky and crumbling rock, averaging a foot in width at the top, and dropping almost sheer on the north side into the hollow of Cwm Glas, while on the south it falls away in an extremely steep slope, which the timid would call a precipice, but which offers an abundance of friendly ledges and notches as foothold. Such is Crib Goch, and along this ridge you must travel to reach the higher cairn, whether you approach it, as I have described, in a descent from Snowdon, or more directly by a stiff climb up its eastern gable from Pen-y-Pas. In any case it has the distinction, among Snowdonian summits, of being accessible only to those pilgrims who are prepared to “climb.”

But if the glory of Snowdon lies in its shapely ridges, and of the Glyders in their wilderness of rocks, it is for the very different qualities of breadth and bulk that we admire the great mountain range of which the centre and crown is Carnedd Llewelyn. Look at a graded map of Carnarvonshire, and you will note that this conspicuous group, extending from the steep spur of Carnedd Dafydd, above the shore of Llyn Ogwen, to the sea-washed promontory of Penmaenmawr, comprises a much greater *extent* of high ground—say, of over three thousand feet—than either Snowdon or the Glyders; and, owing to its larger area, its hidden recesses are wilder, more desolate, and more primitive, than any other hill-tract in North Wales. Sharp peaks it has none; but in places, as at the head of Cwm Eigiau or Cwm Llafar, there are huge crags and precipices, nor are there wanting grand ridges, such as the rocky isthmus that unites Pen Helig to Carnedd Llewelyn, or the high saddle between the two Carnedds themselves; but for the most part what impresses one in these mountains, as compared with those already described, is the greater spaciousness of their massive heights, and the greater openness of their outlook, both skyward and seaward.

For those who love such wilds, nothing is better than a long day’s wandering in the heart of this secluded district, whether the start be made from the Capel Curig quarter, or from Nant Ffrancon on the west, or from the Conway Valley on the east, or from the northern seacoast at Aber; in any case there is need of strong and steady walking to surmount the marshy slopes, the haunt of plover and curlew, by which the great Carnedd is encircled, and to place oneself on the high plateau above. The compass, too, will have to be brought into play, if there are clouds on the hills, for nowhere are mists more bewildering than on these vast moorlands, where there are no natural signposts for our guidance, and where the bare grassy spaces stretch away for miles without a distinguishing mark. The best of all these walks is that from Capel Curig to Aber, which takes us by Llyn Llugwy, the source of the Llugwy River, to Carnedd Llewelyn, and thence across the great flat tops to Y Foel Fras, and down past the little Llyn-an-Afon through a narrow glen to the sea.

For myself these strange lonely mountains, perhaps because I knew them earliest, have always had a peculiar charm; and I have found their fascination as strong in winter-time as in summer. Great as are the delights of Llyn Llugwy on a hot June day, I also think of it with affection as I have known it in December, lashed into fury by the winds, and its black waters in sharp contrast with the surrounding snow. What the temper of the wind can be in these uplands on a gusty winter afternoon, when it lifts up flakes of snow and ice from the hillside and flings them broadcast in blinding showers, only those will understand who have plodded to the top of Carnedd Llewelyn or Carnedd Dafydd at such season.

Enough has now been said, perhaps, to make plain at least the leading characteristics of Snowdonia, as viewed from our central starting-point at Capel Curig. But what the pilgrim to these mountains can never make plain, for he has only half guessed it himself, is the deeper meaning which they have for him, the higher vision which he has caught from their stern companionship during his solitary rambles in their midst.

III

At the Shrine of Scafell

If "angry grandeur," as has been said, is the feature of the Carnarvonshire mountains, that of the Cumbrian Fells may be described as friendly grouping. Unlike the proud oligarchies of Snowdon and the Glyders, we see here a free and equal democracy, a brood of giant brothers, linked together with rocky arm in arm, and with no crowned heads claiming marked predominance over their fellows. It is collectively, rather than singly, that the Lake mountains impress us. "In magnitude and grandeur," says Wordsworth, "they are individually inferior to the most celebrated of those in some other parts of the island; but in the combinations which they make, towering above each other, or lifting themselves in ridges like the waves of a tumultuous sea, they are surpassed by none."[13]

The sense of greater friendliness and accessibility of which we are conscious among these hills may be due partly to this cause, still more, perhaps, to the influence of the Lake writers, who have so largely created the sentiment with which the fells are begirt; we feel "at home" there in a degree not known to us either in Wales or in Scotland. It has to be remembered, too, that the Lake District, in contrast to Wales, is a land without a past, the cradle of a fortunate race which has had no troubled record of wars or rumours of wars, but an almost unruffled exemption from "history"; and this, again, may tend to strengthen the feeling of serenity associated with these heights, even in the minds of those who have undergone many buffetings from their storms. [Pg 50]

But this feeling must be a modern one, for the earliest visitors, as we have seen, were affected rather by the terrors than the charms of the mountains, so that the very bridle-paths seemed as precipices to them, and we find one old traveller sagely remarking that "there is something unmanly in conceiving a difficulty in traversing a path, which, we were told, the women of the country would ascend on horseback, with their panniers of eggs and butter."[14] Of all writers, the best qualified, by his love of the mystic and sublime, to give expression to the awe which the fells once inspired, was De Quincey; and in his *Memorials of Grasmere* he has drawn a highly coloured, yet in spirit very faithful picture of a region rather vaguely apprehended by him, where, as he says, far beyond the "enormous barrier" of his own Easedale, "tower the aspiring heads, usually enveloped in cloud and mist, of Glaramara, Bowfell, and the other fells of Langdale Head and Borrowdale." And here it may be remarked that though much poetry, of a far-fetched kind, has been written about mountains, the mountains are still waiting for their poet, at close quarters. In Wordsworth's "Excursion" certain aspects of the fells are wonderfully portrayed, and in Scott's "Helvellyn," and that canto of his "Lord of the Isles" where the Coolin Hills are the theme, we have true mountain idylls; but on the whole it has to be confessed that the poets have written about mountains as if they had never set foot on them, but had been content to take the panoramic "views" of them from afar. Even Wordsworth's prose account of his ascent from Seathwaite "to the top of the ridge, called Ash Course," makes one suspect that his real acquaintance with the hills was very slight; indeed his corruption of the guide's pronunciation of "Esk Hause" (the typical name of the central saddle of the Scafell range, at the head of Eskdale) into the absurdity of "Ash Course," shows that he had but little sympathetic knowledge either of the nomenclature of the hills or of the dialect of the hillsmen. [Pg 51]

[Pg 52] There is much insight, however, in Wordsworth's selection of the Sty Head as the pivot of the Scafell group. "From a point between Great Gavel and Scafell," he says, "a shepherd would not require more than an hour to descend into any one of the principal vales by which he would be surrounded. Yet, though clustered together, every valley has its distinct and separate character." The truth of this will be owned by every one who has personally studied the district. If we take Scafell Pike, with the Gable and Bowfell, as a single mountain, we have the common centre from which there radiate at least seven important glens—Borrowdale, with its gorgeous colouring and variegated effects of rock and turf, leafage and river; the grave and simple beauty of Buttermere; Ennerdale, wild and primitive, its Pillar Rock rising like a pulpit in the midst; Wastdale, plain to the verge of ugliness, even as an unfurnished room is plain, yet full of the sense of the great heights that wall it round; the solitude of upper Eskdale, with its mighty waterfalls and mountain pools; the more sociable Duddon, and the pastoral greenery of Langdale. Surely nowhere else in Great Britain can we stand on a hill-top with seven such valleys at our feet! As a single starting-point for scaling each and all of these hills, the choice would rest either on Wastdale or on Seathwaite, the little hamlet at the extreme head of Borrowdale, noted as "the rainiest place in England," which means only that when it rains there it rains with a will; they are so placed that there is hardly a summit in the district that cannot be reached by a strong walker from these points. [Pg 53]

Of the four chief groups which the hills of Lakeland assume—Skiddaw to the north, Helvellyn to the east, Grasmoor to the west, and to the south the range of Scafell—the last named is by far the most alluring both to the nature-lover and to the climber, for it is much wilder, rockier and more precipitous than the rest. Looking at a raised or tinted map of the district, we might conceive this rough mountain mass to be a great birdlike figure swooping north-eastward, to dip its beak in Derwentwater; with Glaramara for its down-stretched head and neck, with Great End for its elevated shoulder, from which are extended in sweeping curves to right and left the two superb "wings" of Bowfell and the Gable; with the Pikes as the ruffled plumes of the mighty back, and Scafell as the dark high-spread tail. Such, we may imagine, is the great stone eagle that flies towards the pastures of Borrowdale.

Though devoid, for the most part, of sharp peaks and ridges, and massive rather than graceful in their general form, these Cumbrian Pikes, like the Carnarvonshire Glyders to which in general

character they are akin, have the charm of untamed wildness; you may clamber for weeks together over their desert of crags and coves, yet find their wonders inexhaustible. Seamed as they are in many places by deep “ghylls” and gullies, or carved into stark faces of rock, bristling [Pg 54] with projecting “pinnacles” and “pillars,” the grandest sight of all they have to show is Mickledore Chasm, the great “door” which some primeval force has flung open between the Pikes and Scafell; and it is only when the range is approached from the east or the west that this vast natural fissure, thoroughfare for the winds of heaven, can be properly seen. The very heart of the mountain is reached when you stand on the ridge of Mickledore, with the cliffs of Scafell towering over you on one side and the Pikes on the other, for from this centre you can look down into Eskdale or Wastdale, or climb to either summit, as you choose; and here, in this huge hollow, is often a witches’ cauldron of the clouds, which come drifting up from either valley according to the whim of the wind, until they meet a contrary current at the top, and are piled up in swirling masses on one side of the ridge, while the other side, as if protected by some invisible curtain, remains cloudless and sunlit.

Next to Mickledore in interest is Piers Gill, the gigantic cleft, shut in by high walls of rock, which zigzags down the north slope of the Pikes opposite the Sty Head, rivalling the Welsh “Twll Du” in savageness and much surpassing it in beauty. Viewing it from the top of the Great Gable, one is reminded of a monstrous serpent—a stone serpent in the clutch of the stone eagle—writhing downwards from the crags of Lingmell; when entered from below, it is found to be the [Pg 55] wildest of the many rock-ravines, veritable cañons in miniature, by which these mountains are cloven, as witness the fine Crinkle Gill and Hell Gill on Bowfell, and the famous Dungeon Ghyll, “so foully rent,” on Langdale Pikes.

Turning now to the northern shoulder of the Pikes, the high promontory of Great End, we see around us an almost unbroken continent, with a stony isthmus leading eastward across Esk Pike to Bowfell, so shapely a peak when seen from the Windermere lowlands; and there are few finer walks than to follow these heights for their whole length, passing over Crinkle Crags to the Wrynose Pass, and thence, if time and strength allow, along the Coniston Fells to the Old Man. On the other hand, the leftward wing from Great End, after dipping to the Sty Head, rises steeply again to another chain of summits, the first of which is no less glorious a goal than the crown of the Great Gable.

For, after all, it is neither to Scafell, nor to Bowfell, nor to any lesser fell, that the mountain lover looks, when, after long absence, the well-remembered phalanx of heights—the “tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops,” as Wordsworth so fitly termed them—again unfolds itself to his gaze. He looks to the Great Gable. In so far as the Cumbrian Hills can be singly appraised, the Gable is the summit to which there clings the strongest sentiment, by virtue both of its noble and arresting outline, and of the grand rocks and ridges by which it is so powerfully flanked. Its name is [Pg 56] somewhat ill-chosen, perhaps, for the likeness to a gable is hardly to be discovered except from the south; from other quarters the impression is rather that of a great round tower, or dome, a majestic sight when seen from a few miles’ distance, belted with clouds, or looming up in dark relief against an ominous sky. Nor, when one approaches it more closely, is there any sense of disappointment. “It’s a strange place, is Gable,” said my Wastdale shepherd, and such will certainly be the judgment of those who have roamed in all weathers about its shivered and rock-strewn sides. Of the ordinary ascents, the least inspiring is that usually chosen, from the top of the Sty Head Pass; it is far better, if you come from Seathwaite, to follow the little beck, beloved of the water-ousel, which joins the stream that flows from the Sty Head Tarn, and having thus gained the saddle between the Great and the Green Gable, to skirt the northern verge of the mountain overlooking the Ennerdale precipice, till you reach the broad top; or, if Wastdale be your starting-point, you can ascend by a still more fascinating route, up the long grassy ridge known as Gavel Neese.

Close to the cairn, at the top, is the small rock-cistern in which there is a “perennial” remnant of rain-water, idealized by several writers, following Wordsworth, into a pure and celestial lymph. [Pg 57] “Even in the driest summer,” says the *History of Cumberland* (1883), “the sparkling liquid gushes forth from the little fount.” In truth the pool, at its best, is but stagnant and brackish, and owing to the habits of some tourists is now often polluted with bits of food or newspapers; so that no worse punishment need be invoked on those who pen such fictions than that they should themselves be forced to slake their thirst with its waters. There is the less need to romance about this “fount” because the three real streams that have their source on the Gable are peculiarly fresh and sweet; in fact, there is hardly a more charming little torrent than Gable Beck, which goes singing down into Wastdale on the left of the Neese as you ascend.

But the chief glory of the Gable lies in the wild crags on its southern and northern sides. Much as climbers have written of the Great Napes, the huge outstanding stack of cliffs that seems to overhang the traveller between Wastdale and the Sty Head, scanty justice has been done to their strange and terrible beauty, which is enhanced by the fact that the whole front of the mountain from which they project is itself a precarious scree-slide of extreme steepness, so that in looking up to these impending arêtes one surveys them not from a flat base but from a shifty slope inclining at a sharp angle to the vale, and they have thus all the appearance of a greater precipice upstarting fantastically from a lesser one. Their name of “Napes” is aptly bestowed, for [Pg 58] they are united with the Gable by a narrow neck, where the green turf, streaked with red undersoil, is in bright contrast to the prevailing grey of the mountain.

Standing at the foot of the Napes, one finds in them a series of fanlike ridges and gullies, from one of which rises the famous Needle, subject of countless articles and photographs; and if it be holiday-season there will probably be one or two parties either climbing or prepared to climb.

The Needle being far too slender to accommodate many cragsmen at once, the curious sight may sometimes be witnessed of one set of Needle-men, including more rarely a Needle-woman, gravely waiting their turn, while their predecessors are manœuvring in various postures on the rock. The sport of mountaineering, it may be remarked, differs from certain other sports in this, that, however exciting it maybe to those personally engaged, the mere onlooker is apt to find the spectacle rather tedious; nor is this surprising, when one remembers the large scale of the scene, and that the progress is slow in proportion to the severity of the ascent, a climber on the mountain-side occupying much the same position, relatively, as a fly on the house-wall. Still, there are many of us who would rather be spectators of such gymnastics than take an active part in them.

The crags overlooking Ennerdale, if less peculiar than the Great Napes, are also very impressive, and though long proclaimed "inaccessible" have now been assiduously explored and mapped out by enterprising climbers. A romantic interest, too, attaches to them, through the discovery made by Mr. W. P. Haskett Smith of "a sort of hut of loose stones, evidently the refuge of some desperate fugitive of half a century or more ago," who is presumed, on somewhat imperfect evidence, to have been a smuggler,[15] but whom we should prefer to regard as a pilgrim of the mountains, a fugitive only from the cares and worries of an over-exacting civilization. Whether "Moses' Sledgate," the rather mysterious half-obliterated old track, which may be seen winding round the west side of the Gable, had any connexion, as Mr. Haskett Smith surmises, with the hermitage among the crags, must be left to the reader's imagination; it seems more likely that the prosaic statement of another writer, that the path was formerly used for carrying slates from the Honister Quarries to Wastdale, is the correct one. However that may be, all climbers will subscribe to Mr. Haskett Smith's praise of the Gable as "splendid to look at, splendid to look from, and splendid to climb." It is, in truth, a mountain of mountains, and has the same intimate hold on the affections of the climber in Cumberland as Tryfan has in Wales. [Pg 59]

From the Gable it is but a step—as mountains go—to the Pillar, of which the famous Pillar Rock is a dependency, and even those who are not "Pillarites" in the true sense will find a rare pleasure in scrambling around and about the Rock, which may be reached by the rough track known as the High Level, leading direct to its foot from the top of Black Sail Pass across the face of the fine northern front of the fell, in the course of which "traverse" they will follow the windings of several bold capes and green shady coves. The Rock itself, though somewhat dwarfed by the parent mountain when viewed from a distance, is a grand object from below, when one stands right under the great walls which form its northern buttress. [Pg 60]

Of the many climbers who frequent the new hotel at Wastdale Head, now spoken of as "the Chamounix of the Lake District," few probably remember the place as it used to be when the fine old dalesman, William Ritson, was the landlord, a bleak bare hostel, where the guests, whatever their personal inclinations may have been, led emphatically the simple life. It so happened that, in one of my early visits to Wastdale, I was staying there with a friend at the time when the Rev. James Jackson, the octogenarian known as "the Patriarch of the Pillarites," was killed on the Pillar Fell, and the last evening of his life he spent with us at Ritson's, narrating his own mountain exploits, and reciting the verses in which he celebrated them. It was the last day of April, 1878, and on the May morning the brave old man went forth to repeat his annual pilgrimage to the Pillar Rock; we saw him, and were probably the last to see him, plodding off with slow step in the early twilight. Two days later, when we were coming back to Wastdale from Buttermere, we heard shouts across Ennerdale, and climbing up the Pillar Fell, close to the east of the Rock, in a dense mist, we met a search party, and learnt that Mr. Jackson had not been seen since he started. Joining in the search, we peered and groped about the recesses of Pillar Cove, now dim and ghostly under a heavy pall of vapour; but it was not till the next day, when the clouds had lifted, that the body was found, as a dalesman expressed it, "ligging under the Pillar," the fact being that he had met his death not on the Rock itself, but on a ledge of the steep brow above. It has been said that his vigour was unimpaired, and that the same accident might have happened to a boy, but to us, who were strangers to him, he gave the impression of much physical weakness, and, as the sequel proved, so far from being in a fit state to scale a dangerous crag, he was not capable of crossing the easy ridge which gives access to it. So strong is the fascination of the mountains, which can lure an old pilgrim of eighty-two years thus to sacrifice himself at their shrine! [Pg 61]

Of the other ranges of the Lake District—Helvellyn, Saddleback, Grasmoor, and their kin—differing widely as they do from the Scafell group in their smoother contours and less savage rock-scenery, little need here be said; but there is at least one distinctive feature in which they excel, and that is the number and keenness of their "edges." To a connoisseur in climbing, there is always a great attraction in the mountain which may be approached by a narrow stair— [Pg 62]

> The peak that stormward bares an edge
> Ground sharp in days when Titans warred—

and herein is the unfailing charm of such otherwise formless masses as Saddleback and Helvellyn. Who, for instance, would ascend Helvellyn by that ponderous bank above Wythburn, when he might have Striding Edge for his upward path and Swirrel Edge for his return? And why should any one climb Saddleback by its toilsome grassy slopes, when an ideal course is offered him in Sharp Edge, overlooking Scales Tarn, and in Narrow Edge, which falls away with scarcely less sharpness from the highest summit? I have named the most famous of these edges, but many others not greatly inferior will suggest themselves; thus Fairfield may be delightfully taken by the narrow ridges of Cofa Pike and Hartsop Dodd, and even the bulky Grasmoor assumes an air of

refinement, if scaled by the slim reef of Whiteside, or by the slender arm that it holds out to the promontory of Causey Pike. In old days these knife-edges were reputed difficult and perilous. [Pg 63] “The awful curtain of rock named Striding Edge,” is De Quincey’s description of the chief ornament of Helvellyn; and Green, in describing his adventurous crossing of Sharp Edge on Saddleback, speaks of the necessity “either of bestriding the ridge, or of moving on one of its sides with hands lying over the top, as a security against falling into the tarn on the left or into a frightful gully on the right.” What was once a terror has now become a joy to the climber of ordinary powers, but to this day one may hear expressions of the old misgivings. A friend who had come over the edges of Saddleback told me afterwards that he had felt “sick with fear,” and I have heard a tourist on Snowdon, fresh from the passage of the Beddgelert “Saddle,” exclaim in solemn accents, “It is a thing to be done once in a lifetime, and no more.” In winter, however, all is changed, and these ridges are then made really formidable by the frozen snow-drifts, which can often transform a steep bank into a dangerous ice-slope, with a veritable razor-edge for its summit.

And here, though it is to the shrine of Scafell that we are on pilgrimage, a few words must be said in praise of Borrowdale’s other guardian height. “What was the great Parnassus’ self to thee?” wrote Wordsworth, addressing Skiddaw; and the rock-climber smiles at the question, for Skiddaw, having no rocks, is more attractive to the tripper than to the cragsman. Yet no true lover of mountains will fail to delight in Skiddaw, though it must be confessed that the ordinary [Pg 64] way of ascent, leading along the dullest part of the range, which overlooks the treeless “forest,” does its utmost to make the mountain seem uninteresting. It is significant of the local apathy and lack of initiative, in dealing with mountain scenery, that a route which was originally chosen in the days when such ascents were made on horseback should still be the only recognized one for pedestrians, and that the tourist, after following the path up dreary slopes to the summit, should still retrace his steps by the same way—unless he is so fortunate as to be lost in the mist, and to gain a new experience of Skiddaw by some irregular and more exciting descent.

For the real charm of Skiddaw lies in its southern and western portions, facing Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite, and the descent, at least, should be made in this direction, over the great shoulder known as Carlside, from which one may turn right or left, along the narrow ridge of Longside, or down the lovely glen of Millbeck. It is from this point that one can best appreciate, at close quarters, the beauty as well as the bulk of Skiddaw. Every one who has been in Borrowdale is familiar with the clear-cut outline of the mountain, standing out so simple and shapely against the northern sky, and flanked on either hand by the wooded promontories of Latrigg and the Dodd—a picture which is in marked contrast to the notched and jagged [Pg 65] battlements of Scafell—and there is certainly a wonderful symmetry in the massive buttresses, alternating with the deep-grooved glens, rounded off, like a piece of sculpture, in flawless lines. But, seen closer, the mountain reveals itself as a vast slope of varied colour and composition, smooth everywhere, but patched and streaked with long strips of shale, or grass, or heather, which hang down the great breast of the hill for many hundreds of feet with surprising steepness. At the top is a wilderness of stone, below it a green tract of turf or bilberry, merging into purple heather or wide fields of fern, and all so subtly woven and blended as to produce, especially in late summer and autumn, a rich combination of tints. The Millbeck Valley, in particular, divided by a pyramid-shaped buttress which juts out from Carlside, is then most gorgeously clad in a vestment of many textures and hues.

Not less delightful, though for the most part unknown, is the descent by Longside, a sharp spur, quite unlike the general character of the mountain, which runs out north-westward from Carlside and culminates in Ullock Pike; from which point, looking across a wild glen, one has the most impressive of all near views of Skiddaw, sinking from cope to base in a colossal steep of bare screes, which by its very monotony baffles the eye of the spectator and cheats calculation as to its height.

[Pg 66] I will say, then, that Skiddaw, albeit despised of climbers, is as well worth knowing, in its own distinctive character, as Scafell itself; but those who would know it must seek it not by the beaten track but by the pathless solitudes where the raven still flies undisturbed. Approach it in the right spirit, and Skiddaw will open its heart to you, and you will learn that it is none the less a great mountain because you cannot break your neck upon its slopes.

[Pg 67]

IV
Pleasures of the Heights

“What pleasure lives in height? the shepherd sang.” Only a very lovesick shepherd, who had his own reasons for praising the valley at the expense of the mountain, could have asked a question so foolish; for the pleasures of the heights are manifold and beyond count. Let us consider a few of these pleasures, just those cheap and simple ones which are in the reach of anybody who, without aspiring to be a skilled rock-climber or Alpinist, is drawn by his love for our English or Welsh hills to spend long days among their solitudes, and to cope with the difficulties, such as they are, of weather and season in planning and effecting his ascents—the choice of routes, the fording of streams, the avoidance of precipices, and the keeping of the right course in dense and blinding mists.

Equipped, then, with a modicum of food, with map, compass, and field-glasses, we sally forth

emancipated from all that usually deadens us to the direct messages of Nature. For it is one of Nature’s citadels that we are scaling, and we know not in which of her varying moods we shall find her; but we know that in these uplands all her moods are beautiful, and that it is not the fair-weather climber that is privileged to comprehend them best. Here, at least, is a region where in all seasons, and in all weathers, not a sight or sound but brings contentment to the mind. [Pg 68]

It has been remarked by Elisée Reclus, in his charming *History of a Mountain*, that of all forms of travel to travel upwards is the most instructive, for by climbing a few thousand feet we enjoy more novel experiences than in a lateral journey of as many miles, and it often happens that the first experience of the climber, as of the aeronaut, is to find himself in the country of the clouds.

As we start up the valley, perhaps, the “white horses” of last night’s rain-storms are still racing down the slopes, and our staircase of mingled grass and rock bears the shadow of the dense cloud overhead—a scene of unrelieved dreariness to those who are unaware of what glories it may be the gateway. Toiling upwards, we reach the swirling fringe of vapour, which closes gradually round us and wraps from us all view of the familiar landscape below. Still on and up we press, till, as we set foot on the higher ridges, the magic of cloud-land begins; for lo! what in the ordinary light of day were mere rocks and buttresses are changed now and magnified into mysterious shadowy forms, looming dimly out upon us from the mist, until we half wonder whether the compass or our own memory has misled us, and we have strayed into some strange unmapped district where the air is thick with phantoms. Often and often have I had such thought, when beclouded on the great rocky plateau of the Glyders or Scafell Pikes, or groping my way along one of the narrow “cribs” of Carnarvonshire or one of the Cumberland “edges”; and I do not think that any one imbued with the love of mountains would exchange these hours of cloudy surmisings for all the crystal skies that give the “views”, so desired of tourists, from the top. Not that I would undervalue the exhilarating sensation—unlike anything else in life—of reaching the summit of a mountain; but to the true mountaineer all other interests are subordinate to the fact of the mountain-presence itself, even if that presence be veiled, as it often is, in remorseless drift of rain-cloud. [Pg 69]

For it may be admitted that mountains, like some other objects of human affection, are apt to subject their lovers to a chilling ordeal, days and weeks of repeated denials and disappointments, until at times the most ardent may despond; or if one present himself as a returned prodigal, seeking instant favour after absence, he may but find, as Thoreau expressed it, that there has been killed for him “the fatted cloud.” But to the faithful there will come at last, quite suddenly and unexpectedly perhaps, a moment which makes such gracious amends that all past unkindnesses are forgotten. You are standing, it may be, on some high ridge or summit, drenched with rain, buffeted by winds, and wondering if perchance any sign is to be vouchsafed to you. The mist floats by in thick interminable volume. But see! What is that small dark rift in the grey monotonous curtain? Wider and wider it grows, until it is framed there, like a magic stage among the clouds, and through that gap, where a moment before you saw but twenty paces, you may now see as many miles, a fair expanse of valleys, lakes and rivers, with the sea gleaming in the background. Another moment, and it is gone—to be restored again, and withdrawn again, in quick succession—a shifting scene more glorious than ever eye has witnessed, save in the region of clouds or dreams. [Pg 70]

In a thick mist, such as is apt to enfold with extreme suddenness the hills of which I speak, perhaps not to release them for days from its shadowy grip, the careful use of a compass is almost a necessity, except in places where the landmarks are familiar and beyond mistake; for the transformation which the mountains undergo is surprising even to those who know them best; and if once the true sense of direction be lost, it is most difficult to recover it, especially on broad, smooth plateaus or hillsides where there are no sharp-featured rocks. In the ascent there is less likelihood of going astray, for there is but one summit, and by climbing we shall find it; but in descending there is always a greater possibility of error, with the chance, if we get on the wrong side of the watershed, of emerging some twenty miles away from home. The sensation of thus coming down on the reverse side of a mountain range is most perplexing, for at first sight, and until we can readjust our minds to the fact, everything seems confused, the quarters of the horizon have changed places, north is south, and we can hardly believe that our left is not our right. A friend of mine who was lost on Snowdon in a mist, made his way down, as he thought, towards Llanberis, with the intention of thence walking rightward to Pen-y-Gwryd; he reached a road which he took to be the pass of Llanberis, and duly turned to the right. Not until after he had walked some miles did he discover that he was well on the way towards Carnarvon, having descended, without knowing it, on the wrong side of Snowdon and into a different part of Wales. [Pg 71]

To be lost in a fog is of course no uncommon experience among strangers who cross the fells. On one occasion (not strictly to be classed among “pleasures” of the heights), when descending from Scafell Pike to Langdale in furious storm and cloud, I met near Angle Tarn a wandering, one-eyed tramp, who presented about as miserable an appearance as human being could attain. The proverbial “drowned rat” would have scorned to exchange plight with him. He had been discharged, he told me, a few days before, from a hospital in a northern town, where they had taken out one of his eyes without consulting him, and with the remaining eye he was seeking his way to a relative at Keswick by the Stake Pass, from which he had hopelessly wandered. As we descended Rossett Gill together, for I took him back to Langdale, he confided to me that this was his first experience of a mountain, and he thought it would suffice till his death—an event which, but for his happening to meet our party, would probably not have been long delayed. [Pg 72]

A strange effect is produced, when one is descending, if the clouds are descending too; for the deepening mist then makes the delay in reaching sunlight seem endless. Down and down we go,

and the gloom is still beneath us, until we begin to wonder, like the first voyagers on the Atlantic, whether we are sinking into some bottomless abyss from which it may be impossible to re-arise; it becomes a burden and nightmare to the mind; then at last there is a darkening of the vapour in one spot, and far below we see the jet-black water of a tarn, or a bit of brown mountain-side across the glen.

More inspiriting is the effect of climbing through and above the clouds, as one sometimes can do, until one looks down from an upper land of sunshine on a sea of mist below, from which the rocky peaks and promontories emerge like islands. It occasionally happens, when some high ridge is bathed in cloud on one side and in sun on the other, that a climber, standing on the edge of the gulf, will see a small circular rainbow projected on the mist, with his own head forming the centre of it—a rare and curious experience for the wayworn pilgrim, thus to find his image, like that of a saint, with a halo round his head, emblazoned on the mountain vapours! Who shall say that the modern pilgrim is not blessed, as his forerunners were, with celestial apparitions? The first time I saw this phenomenon was on the ridge of Ben Nevis. I have also seen it from Blaven, in Skye, and from the top of Scafell, looking down into the cloud-filled chasm of Mickledore.

Not less marvellous are the transformations of the clouds themselves, when, after a spell of storm, they break up under triumphant sunshine and drift disbanded along the slopes. I remember how once, descending from Tryfan after a wet and dismal day, and returning across the low grassy moorlands to Capel Curig, I witnessed that strange form of mountain mirage recorded by Wordsworth in "The Excursion." The corner of the valley above Llyn Ogwen was filled with dense mists, which came seething and boiling out of the hollow like steam from a cauldron, and as they broke up into small wisps and wreaths, under combined wind and sunshine, gave an extraordinary appearance to the northern front of Carnedd Dafydd, which was enveloped in a maze of billowy vapour, until it was impossible to distinguish rock from cloud or cloud from rock, and the illusion was exactly that which the poet has described:

> Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
> Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
> Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed
> ...
> In fleecy folds voluminous enwrapped.

It is nearly fifty years since I saw that sight, but we do not forget what we see among mountains as what we read in books.

There dwell in the memory too (for I must not give the impression that the mountains are always scourged with storm) the days and sometimes weeks in succession when the weather is without a flaw—trance-like spells when the hills stand calm and pensive in every vicissitude of loveliness, now clear and imminent, with ridges sharply outlined against the sky, now dim and ghostly, half shrouded in a mild and breathless haze. But even the loveliest day is seldom perfected without the ministry of cloud, for clouds are the Genii of the mountains, concealing much, but revealing more, by their presence, and bringing to view the manifold depths and distances that would otherwise be unobserved. You cannot learn the moods and character of a mountain until you have studied its attendant clouds.

Nor must the pleasures of winter be overlooked, for, as Southey wrote of the mountains:

> Who sees them only in their summer hour,
> Sees but their beauties half, and knows not half their power.

It was pointed out by the same writer that snow, instead of making the view of the fells monotonous, has a contrary effect, "it brings out all their recesses, and differentiates all their inequalities." Even clouds are scarcely more efficacious in revealing the hitherto unnoticed distances; for the snow, when not too deep, is a mask which does not conceal, but takes a delicate impression of the hillside, so that every crack and crinkle, every unsuspected groove, ravine, terrace, or even sheep-path, is made to stand out in clear relief. To rocks, in particular, a thin powdering of snow will give a strange, chequered, almost ethereal look, reminding one of Scott's lines about Melrose Abbey seen under moonlight:

> When buttress and buttress, alternately,
> Seem framed of ebon and ivory.

In the joy felt by the experienced climber on arriving at his mountain-top the view, perhaps, plays but a subordinate part, though there is always a fascination in a very distant prospect across sea or plain, such as one may get in the early morning, or when the air is clear after a rain shower or a snow squall, as when, from Wales or Cumberland, as the case may be, one sees the Isle of Man resting like a dream on the water, with a pillow of fleecy cloud around it. In this respect the views from the two districts are very similar, for on every side except the east their horizons extend to the sea, and both possess the same great charm, lacking in the Alps and other continental ranges, of overlooking a coast-line broken by shallow estuaries, where at low tide there is an expanse of gleaming red sands, with the plain of dim blue water in the rear. To have seen Snowdon from Scafell, or Scafell from Snowdon, across the hundred miles that lie between them, is a rare privilege which few climbers have enjoyed, and of which, in spite of many visits to either mountain, I cannot personally speak; far more often it is the great northern headland of Carnedd Llewelyn which is discerned from the Cumbrian hills and bars the further view. Apart from such remarkable sights as these, the pleasure of the summit, I think, arises chiefly from that sense of *power* to which a wide outlook contributes—you feel how vast a territory you

"command" from your airy fortress; you are for the moment an overseer of men, a super-man, with all the kingdoms of the world stretched at your feet.

Having spoken of the sights, let me speak of the sounds of the mountain, for the ear is not less fascinated than the eye in these echoing temples, where the upper cloughs and chambers are as huge whispering galleries, and sounds are often carried from immense distances, yet in so modulated and subtle a tone as to leave a haunting impression on the mind. There is a solemnity about these mountain voices which is only comparable, on a larger scale, to the effects produced in the hollow space of a cathedral; hence the perfect appropriateness, as has been pointed out, of Wordsworth's much criticized reference to the "solemn voice" of the mountain lamb. The singing of the stream below, the deep croak of the raven as he sails on his straight course overhead, the shrill cry of the wheeling buzzard, the bleat of a sheep and even the noise of a detached stone falling from the cliff to the screes, come to us with a significance which would hardly be intelligible elsewhere. The wind, too, has some strange things to tell us, as it tears itself into shreds on the rocks, or lifts the water from the tarns and streams and dashes it in spray to the sky, or startles us with muffled subterranean sobbings as we cross some exposed ridge. Listening among the higher mountains in rough or cloudy weather, we may hear sounds so wild and mysterious that their origin wholly baffles us. There is also felt, at times, a strange apprehension —or should we say premonition?—of the presence of human beings, which may be due to the ear having become unconsciously aware of their approach, if not to some other sense more poignant and occult.

One sometimes sees strange companionships on mountains. Once, when I was on the Glyder Fach with some friends, we heard the steps of a party ascending by the steep northern screes from Cwm Tryfan, and presently two men came into sight, the leader with a cloak thrown over his shoulder in cavalier-like style, the follower in the garb of a serving man. In this manner they crossed the summit-plateau, and when they neared the edge of the southern escarpment, the valet (for that he was valet, not guide, we inferred both from his demeanour and the order of their procession) dropped respectfully to the rear, while his master stood for some time as if wrapped in thought, and gazing out over the wide scene that had Cardigan Bay as its limit. Then, the reverie ended, he turned back towards Cwm Tryfan, and followed by his demure attendant, descended as he had come. Was he a prince or a poet, we wondered; and if a poet, how could his sensitiveness bear the near presence of a servant—a servant!—in that great freedom of the mountain, where one would expect the distinctions of rank to disappear?

The voices of the mountain streams become, of course, less powerful in proportion to the height to which the traveller attains, until from the distant summits he hears them only in fitful intervals, now clear, now hushed, according to the force and direction of the wind; but alike in the valley and on the hillside there is that singular aerial quality in the sound which makes it different to all other voices in Nature. This is the music which De Quincey described as like that "of pealing anthems, as if streaming from the open portals of some illimitable cathedral," and he adds, with special reference to the river Brathay, in Langdale, that "such a sound does actually arise, in many states of the weather, from the peculiar action of the river upon its rocky bed; and many times I have heard it, of a quiet night, when no stranger could have been persuaded to believe it other than the sound of choral chanting, distant, solemn, saintly." The same illusion, if it be an illusion, may be felt by one who rests with closed eyes on the bank of any of the small steep becks, which go purling down the slopes, to feed the larger rivers below.

And now for the joys of the descent. The regret with which the mountain lover turns his back on the summits and leaves

> The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
> Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,

is tempered with the pleasure of choosing some well-pounded scree-slope or soft grassy stair, down which he may race, with the skill and sureness of foot which long practice has given him, towards the abodes of men, and, like a miser turned spendthrift, may squander in one wild fling the thousands of upward steps so laboriously amassed. It is extraordinary with what speed, given suitable foothold, you may run from top to bottom of a mountain which it took you hours to climb; the Alpine glissade is hardly more glorious. Then, if the day be hot, there awaits you that supreme reward and crown of your labours—the bath.

Can bliss be greater than that of coming down sun-scorched and footsore, to the divine cool streams which fall from hill to valley through a series of rock-pools, each a fit bath-place for an emperor, or to the lakes which tempt the swimmer below, or to the sea itself, never far distant from these mountains? To bathe after a stern day on the heights is the elysium of the climber; no ordinary mortals can understand the passion with which he betakes himself to the healing waters. After coming off the Glyders in a burning sun, I have known the traveller leap into Llyn Idwal, to the consternation of its motionless fishermen; I have seen wonder, too, in the faces of wood-cutters by Buttermere, at the sight of a fellow-being rushing down crazed, as they thought, from the banks of High Stile, and plunging into the lake even while a thunderstorm burst overhead. Assuredly the Delectable Mountains themselves can contain nothing more delectable than their streams.

There is a reckless joy, too, in the descent on a wet and stormy afternoon, when, after facing rain and wind for hours on the ridges, we return home drenched and weather-beaten, with the exhilaration that arises in the mind which has nothing to hope or to fear. Indeed, the foul day has its proper place, no less than the fair day, in the economy of the hills, when the rain-curtain is drawn visibly across the valley, and scores of white runnels are coursing down the slopes, and

the voice of the swollen river sounds hoarser every hour, while it rises as only a mountain river can rise. [Pg 81]

Such are some of the pleasures which the mountaineer is heir to. But whether we leave the heights in calm or storm, in sunshine or shadow, we leave them only for the moment; we descend, but with an inner prompting to return. However prosperous our ascent may have been, there is always the something left undone, the ridge unclimbed or valley unexplored, which is the spur to further effort. Here, if nowhere else in the land, the sense of satiety is unknown; and it is to this mental tonic, even more than to the bracing air of the heights, that we owe the unwearied spirit which nerves us to walk more leagues upon the mountains than we could walk miles upon the plain. For in the lowlands we walk with the body only; in the highlands we walk also with the mind.

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V
Wild Life

To the rambler upon these hills few things are so attractive, next to the hills themselves, as the glimpses which he gains into the ways of the non-human people that have their homes there. It thrills us to remember that the mountains, lonely though we call them, have for centuries on centuries had their own populous dramas of life and death, and that their rocky tenements were inhabited, in some cases down to comparatively modern times, by the bear, the wolf, the boar, the wild cat, and other hardy outlaws that now exist but in a name or a tradition; but while we must lament the loss of such peaceful animals as the beaver, spoken of by Giraldus Cambrensis as still resident on one Welsh stream in the twelfth century,[16] and the stag, now surviving only in a corner of the Lake District, we need not affect to regret the disappearance of the more savage beasts of prey, for banditti, whether human or non-human, must be subdued. [Pg 83]

And it is one of the compensating advantages of the destruction of the greater "game" that the mountains are no longer a hunting-place. You may walk where you will, round Snowdon or round Scafell, without the fear of being turned back, as so often happens in the Scotch highlands, by the nuisance of game-preserving; nor will your own feelings be harassed by the spectacle of a troop of deer-stalkers, or other blood-sportsmen intent on "killing something." There is, of course, fishing in plenty, but that, as far as I have watched it in these upland places, is an exercise rather of faith and imagination than of the red right hand; at any rate one seldom *sees* the fisherman catch anything, and the "fool with a gun" is now as rare a sight as the rare birds whom his forerunners have "dropped"—to use that telling expression of the game-keepers. Fox-hunting on foot goes on to some extent in the winter months; but the need of killing these mischievous pilferers is here a reality, and not, as in fashionable hunting-counties, a sham, and we may rightly wish to see the fox exterminated as the wolf has been—a far humaner and more rational course than that of "preserving" him to be tortured by huntsmen. The otter-worry, that very mean form of cruelty, is carried on in the lower valleys of a few mountain districts, where the pools are large and deep, but climbers on the hills are in little danger of meeting with the motley rabble who partake in it. [Pg 84]

Here, then, is another goodly feature of mountaineering, that, as one of its accomplished masters, Mr. Owen Glynne Jones, observed, it "does not claim the sacrifice of beasts and fishes." The craft of climbing is a fine physical training which, as a school of manliness and self-reliance, immeasurably transcends the wretched amateur butchery that masquerades as "sport." "The mountaineer," says Reclus, "experiences, like the huntsman, the delight of conquest after toil, yet he enjoys the pleasure all the more, in that he has risked none but his own life; he has kept his hands unstained."

In the absence of the larger kinds of wild animals that have gone down under the stress of what we call civilization, it is to the mountain birds that we first turn with interest. We think at once of the golden eagle, in regions where the names of so many cliffs recall his former sovereignty; and those who have seen the great bird, as I have, flying in freedom among the mountains of Skye, and, as happened on one occasion I recall, mobbed by dwarfish-looking ravens, as a kestrel is mobbed by sparrows, on the shores of Loch Coruisk, until he sailed off on wide wings across the corrie, cannot but regret that he is no longer known in his traditional haunts on Snowdon, or on his famous crag in Borrowdale. But when we read in old books of travel, such as West's *Guide to the Lakes in Cumberland* (1781), that "the devastation made on the fold in the breeding-season, by one eyrie, was computed at a lamb a day," we understand why the doom of the eagle was even then unavoidable and why it became "a common species of traffic," as another author described it, "to supply the curious with young eagles, in the taking of which the inhabitants were very expert."[17] [Pg 85]

I was told by a sheep-farmer in Scotland, who had trapped or shot over a score of these feathered freebooters, that for an eagle to carry off a plump lamb from the pastures there is need of a freshening breeze to lift the mighty wings; he had seen cases when, in dull listless weather, the bird was unable to rise with its quarry, and on the approach of the shepherd was obliged to abandon it and flap reluctantly away.

A lady who had been pained to see a golden eagle "for sale," once asked me whether, in the event of her ransoming the captive, it would be possible to set him at liberty on some mountain

height, and for a time I was rather dazzled by the idea of releasing the imperial bird from the top of Snowdon or Scafell, or, if the companionship of other eagles was desired, from some far northern peak; but on my consulting a well-known ornithologist he assured me that the eagle, [Pg 86] cramped by long imprisonment, would probably be unable to fly, and that if he did fly he would almost certainly fall a victim to some local "sportsman," or be pecked to death by his wild congeners, if there were any in the neighbourhood; so in the face of these discouraging predictions the project was given up.

Eagles, then, we have none in our Welsh and English mountains, and the kite having now been reduced to so poor a remnant as to be numbered with the lost British birds, we turn perforce to the buzzard and the peregrine as the two most noteworthy representatives of the family of the Falcons. The fiery-hearted peregrine, or "falcon-hawk," as the dalesmen call him, still breeds on certain rocky ramparts, whence he can overlook the valleys and dart forth unerringly on any passing prey. An eye-witness once described to me how a falcon, having struck down one of two pigeons in a field at the head of Langdale, and being scared from his victim by some harvesters who saw the chase, rose instantly and was off at lightning speed after the other pigeon over the ridge of Bowfell!

We look in vain to the buzzard for such indomitable energies; yet it is a grand sight to watch him sailing aloft in leisurely circles, or hanging poised, as he sometimes does, off the edge of some broken escarpment, so near that you can see his barred feathers and quickly glancing eye. On a misty day in rounding a sharp headland, I have sometimes come suddenly upon a perched [Pg 87] buzzard at only a few yards' distance, and have seen him flutter up in a panic, to lose himself in the clouds; in the nesting season the bird will occasionally "shadow" an intruding climber almost as the curlew does, and follow him at close distance along the ridge of the mountain until he has conducted him off his estate. I have frequently seen buzzards and ravens sparring at each other in the sky, in that desultory and ineffective manner of warfare which many birds seem to adopt.

The raven, who, in default of the eagle, divides with the buzzard the empire of the crags is, perhaps, the most interesting bird that now claims our attention; and robber though he is, we are always glad to hear his deep "*kronk*," or his wild dog-like bark, before the black form is seen skirting the edge of the precipice or winging straight across the glen. It is somewhat strange that in spite of the persecution of shepherds, the cupidity of collectors, and the inroads of rock-climbers, so large a bird can still find undisturbed breeding-places, and maintain his numbers as well as he does among our British hills; but I think the case of the raven, as far as these districts are concerned, is hardly so desperate as ornithologists give us to understand. To walk for several hours among the Carnarvonshire or the Cumberland mountains without evidence of ravens, is in my experience rather unusual, and at times one may see them there in great strength; a few [Pg 88] years ago, for example, I watched nine birds one August afternoon soaring and skimming with playful antics along the edge of Grasmoor, and so intent on their game that they allowed me to come within quite close range; on another occasion I saw more than a score of them rise together from the side of Skiddaw, doubtless from a carrion feast.

It is astonishing how near this wary outlaw will approach to dwelling-houses in the early summer mornings before mankind is on the stir. It so happened that from the cottage at Capel Curig where I used to stay, I could see a section of the hillside above as I lay in bed, and on two successive mornings I was puzzled by what seemed to be a concourse of large fowls hopping and squabbling, a few hundred yards from my window, round some object on the bank. On further investigation I found this object to be the carcase of a sheep, and the combatants to be hungry ravens "on the grab."

But there are other and more cheery singers in the mountain choir. In the early summer, when the bird-life of these upland valleys is at its prime, two voices above all others are resonant along the Welsh hillsides, those of the cuckoo and the curlew, who fill the clear air with their clear melody the whole of the long June day, and not a little of the night. There are, perhaps, few sounds in wild nature more fascinating than the curlew's call, starting, as it does, with its strange single note, and gradually rising and breaking into what seems like rings and bubbles of [Pg 89] exquisitely liquid song, which fall here and there on the grey moorland while the singer is often unseen. As for the cuckoo, that *improbus anser* of the hills, there are seasons when he seems to be ubiquitous; you pass him shouting in the valley as you start out; you meet him again and again about the middle region of heathery boulders and grass slopes; and when you emerge on the sky-line and think you have left him far below, his voice comes after you, as jubilant as ever, and pursues you to the very cairn on the top.

Familiar friends, also, are the ring-ousel, or, as some call him, the rock-ousel, and the wheatear; the one as fussy and loquacious as his lowland cousin, the blackbird (thanks to his outcry, I have sometimes found his nest on a ledge of steep heather-covered rock, as under the northern front of Tryfan); the other flitting silent and watchful, with quick jerky movements, from stone to stone, or along the grey wall on the mountain. These with the ever-welcome meadow-pipit, are rarely absent from the hillside. Of the river birds there is none that has so strong a hold on the affections of the mountaineer as the water-ousel, delightful little sprite of the tumbling becks and eddies, from which his very being seems inseparable. No writer with whom I am acquainted has paid a juster tribute to the many charms of the water-ousel than the author of *The Mountains of California*, whose chapter on the American variety of the bird (*Cinclus Mexicanus*) [Pg 90] recalls many of the traits of our English "dipper" as we have known him, none too plentifully, beside his native streams and pools. The grey wagtail and the sandpiper will be found in similar haunts.

The beasts of the mountain, as viewed by the passing observer are, with one exception, less

interesting, because less wild, than the birds; for the fox and the "mart" are seldom seen by the climber, who, in his eagerness to reach his goal, has no time to devote, as the naturalist would, to a patient watching of their haunts. The exception is the wild goat, which, strange to say, is not known as a British species by the majority of naturalists, though it has much more right to that distinction than the "wild" Chillingham cattle; for it is a fact that on some of the Welsh mountains as on some Scottish islands, there are still herds of goats which, if not indigenous (that claim, it seems, is disproved by their mixed colours and the shape of their horns), are yet living in a state of absolute freedom and wildness, full of courage and resource, and able to hold their own under hardships of climate which no domestic animal could endure, and there is little doubt that these herds, though descended from escaped animals, and reinforced from time to time by "strays" that have taken to the hills, are of very great antiquity. They used to be common, a century or less ago, in a number of craggy spots, such as the Pass of Aberglaslyn, from which they have now been driven; but a remnant may still be seen on the Rhinog Fawr, and a few other lonely ranges, by those who approach them with due care.[18] It was lately stated in a London paper that "wild goat stalking among the Hebrides can fairly stand comparison with ibex shooting"; and I can remember, some forty-five years ago, hearing some talk at Pen-y-Gwryd about an expedition to Snowdon to shoot goats. There are as few goats as eagles on Snowdon now; but I can testify that the sport is an excellent one when the field-glass is substituted for the rifle, for in this way I have stalked some fine goats on the Rhinog and elsewhere, and have rejoiced to see them go bounding across the cliffs in style that would do credit to the Swiss chamois or the white goat of the Rockies. I was told that there was a similar herd on the Yewdale Fells, near Coniston; but the only wild goat that I have seen in the Lake District was a solitary one whom I surprised, in a steep and secluded hollow, on the rocky side of Glaramara.

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These wild Welsh goats must not be confused with the half-domesticated herds which it was the custom until about fifty years ago to keep on the hills as sheep are now kept. We are told by Cliffe in his *Book of North Wales* (1851) that "but few of the national animal, the goat, are now kept, in consequence of the injury which they have done to the young plantations"; and the same writer gives a vivid account of a goat-hunt—apparently of the wild animal—which he witnessed on the Rhinog.

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> While ascending we heard much shouting, and barking of dogs, intermingled with piercing shrieks. Then we passed a gigantic snow-white billy-goat, with his legs tied, struggling at intervals convulsively, and uttering very shrill cries. Presently we came in sight of several men in a narrower part of the Pass, striving to capture another white billy-goat of greater size and even longer horns. The animal had taken refuge, after a long chase, on a very narrow ledge in a precipice, and apparently bid defiance to his pursuers. At last he bounded suddenly from a great height, and ran rapidly over broken rocks and heath for about six hundred yards, with the pack of dogs close at his heels, who ultimately brought him up, but were kept at bay by his horns.

From the mountain goats we pass naturally to the mountain sheep, who, though nominally domesticated, are so little subject to human interference and live so great a portion of their lives at large upon the hills, that as compared with our dull southern breeds they may almost be regarded as wild animals. Very familiar to every one who has spent much time on the mountains is the sharp "sneeze" of the sheep as he gives warning to his fellows that a stranger is approaching. Writing of the Welsh sheep, half a century ago, Cliffe tells us that they differed entirely in their habits from those of an enclosed country. "Roaming wherever inclination leads them, confined by few or no fences, they are obliged for mutual defence against foxes, ravens, and other birds of prey, to form parties of ten or twelve, of which number, if one perceives anything advancing towards the little flock, he turns and faces the object, when, if its appearance be hostile, he warns his companions by a shrill whistling noise, and the whole scamper off to the more inaccessible wilds."

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Since this was written, the extent of many pasture-lands has been lessened; but there are still places where the sheep have a whole mountain, or several mountains, to roam over, and live in a state of considerable freedom and liveliness. An old man who used to spend the summer months at the top of a high pass in the Lake District, where he sold refreshments to tourists, and slept in a little hut built right into the steep hillside, told me that his only discomfort arose from the noisy gambols of the sheep, who kept him awake by disporting themselves on his grassy roof after nightfall. Thus, like the lady in *Locksley Hall*, he must lie and ponder—

> In the dead unhappy night, and when the *ram* is on the roof.

Imagine any one suffering in this manner from the frolics of our south-country *muttons*!

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The mountain lambs, especially, have a rare sprightliness and beauty, and there is scarcely a more lovely picture to be seen among the hills than one of these superb little creatures poised intrepid on a high rock or wall as the traveller passes below, and looking down on him with an innocent and wistful curiosity. Such a sight makes it pitiful to remember to what base uses man has turned the sheep, and how degraded is the domestic breed, as we commonly see it, from the glorious wild animals described in the *Mountains of California*. "The domestic sheep," says Muir, "is expressionless, like a dull bundle of something only half alive, while the wild is as elegant and graceful as a deer, every movement manifesting admirable strength and character. The tame is timid; the wild is bold. The tame is always more or less ruffled and dirty; while the wild is as smooth and clean as flowers of his mountain pastures."

The sheep of the Welsh hills and the Cumbrian fells is a sort of connecting-link between Muir's *ovis montana* and the silly creature of our meadows; but it must be admitted that he sadly lacks

the marvellous climbing powers of his wilder relative, for when he ventures on the tempting ledges of turf that intersect the sheer precipices he sometimes shares the fate of the "meek mountain lamb" in Scott's "Helvellyn."

I once saw an unfortunate "cragbound" sheep on a narrow and very dangerous terrace that overhangs the great eastern verge of Tryfan, where, having eaten all the grass on the ledge, she was peering nervously about, trying to summon up the courage to make a backward leap to safety. After descending from the mountain, I called at the farm below, and got a promise that the sheep should somehow be saved from its plight; but on the following day I found the same tragedy proceeding. Again I sought and received assurances from the shepherds that they would go with ropes to the rescue, but as I had to leave Wales the next morning I never learnt the sequel, which I fear may have yielded more satisfaction to the ravens than to the sheep.

If the mountain sheep must be deemed half wild, can less be said of that lean, gaunt, hungry, savage, but highly intelligent animal, the sheep-dog of Cumberland or Wales? It is one thing to see these "friends of man" in their educated capacity, collecting or dispersing the sheep under their owner's vociferous bidding; it is quite another thing to see them gorging ravenously on a carrion sheep, and slinking off with wolfish demeanour when disturbed. Historians may tell us that "the last wolf" was killed among these mountains some centuries back; but we make bold to doubt that assertion when surrounded by half a dozen bristling "Gelerts" in the wilds of Wales, for it would then seem that not a little of the character of *canis lupus* has survived in domestication. For my part, I would rather meet a Welsh bull on an open grass-slope than a pack of these snarling sheep-dogs when their master is out of call, for I can bear witness that at such a moment Mr. Jack London's choicest wolf-stories are brought too forcibly to mind, and that "the call of the wild" has an unpleasant reality of its own. The traveller who has been followed halfway up Carnedd Llewelyn by a troop of these "white-fangs," in an interval of their duties at the sheep-washing in Llyn Llugwy, will be able to form at least an "intelligent anticipation" of how it feels to be pursued by real wolves in the forests of the north-west. The mountain sheep-dog is still half a wolf, and not without reason has Mr. Thompson Seton made sheep-dogs the heroes of two of the chapters of his *Wild Animals I have Known*.

I have incidentally mentioned the bull; and who that has walked much in Carnarvonshire or Merioneth will be so pedantic as to deny the bull his place among the *fauna* of these districts? Theoretically, no doubt, he must be classed with the domestic; but in practice there are times when his domesticity is apt to be doubted by the wayfarer, and when even the cheery assurances of the Welsh herdsman (if within hail) that "she will do nothing to you," leave much to be desired. Turned out in early summer on the roadways and hill-slopes, with that national disregard for Saxon weaknesses which has characterized the Cymry from of old, the black bulls of these hilly regions are an element that has to be taken into account, together with winds and waters, in the traveller's plan of campaign. I have known a party of tourists compelled to elect between meeting the angry animal or relinquishing the direct ascent—a choice between bull and "bwlch"—and unanimously agreed in favour of a rearward move. I once camped with a friend for a fortnight in an artist's van, pitched on an open plot in an upland valley where a big bull was pastured; and when we heard him in the darkness playfully scratching back or sharpening horns on our door-step, we bethought us of those weird stories of wild life in the backwoods, where the dwellers in the lonely log-hut hear the long-drawn sniff of the strolling bear, as he "samples" them under their bolted door at night.

In some of the valleys round Snowdon there is a strange-looking breed of black and white Scandinavian cattle, whose appearance at close quarters on a dark night is rather eerie, because only the white part of each animal is easily visible, and the traveller has the spectacle of a detached head, or shoulder, or hind-quarter, as the case may be, confronting him through the gloom.

As a rule, it is only in spells of great heat, such as occasionally descend upon the mountains, that the bulls are really dangerous, and then they are seldom approached, even by the herdsman, without the aid of dogs. It is said that the most ominous symptom on the bull's part is when, instead of the usual shrill bellow, he gives vent to a low querulous grumbling sound, which seems to imply a deeply felt long-cherished grievance; at such times it is wise to give him a wide berth. After all, can we men complain, if the bull sometimes shows himself dissatisfied with our treatment of his fellows? Who knows but that his splenetic outbursts have some reference to the massacre of his kith and kin at the hands of the "family butcher," or to the savage dietetic habits of the very people who denounce *him* as "the savage brute"? What I have thought a little hard, however, is that no discrimination is made by the bull between beef-eater and vegetarian, and that the peaceful pilgrim who has not tasted sirloin for over forty years is compelled to skulk up the hill under cover of a stone wall as guiltily as the shameless intruder who has a beef-sandwich in his pocket. Some vegetarians, I believe, advocate the wearing of a badge; there would be more to be said in favour of the distinction, if the black bulls of Snowdonia would consent to recognize such flag of truce.

We see, then, that the Cambrian and Cumbrian hills, though far less richly populated than they were some centuries back, have yet no little interest to offer us in the races of non-human peoples, wild or half-wild, that inhabit them—races whose life is much more closely intertwined with the life of the mountain itself, and more responsive to its varying moods and seasons, than that of the shepherd born and bred on its slopes, not to speak of the summer visitor who comes there for mere pastime or recreation.

VI
The Barren Hillside

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We talk of the barrenness of the mountains, and barren in a sense they are, when contrasted with the teeming wealth of the plain, yet the bleakest of them, if studied with sympathy and insight, will be found to have a living and life-giving freshness of its own. Now and then, perhaps, when face to face with some scene of more than common severity, we are tempted to exclaim, with Scott:

> The wildest glen, but this, can show
> Some touch of nature's genial glow:
> On high Benmore green mosses grow,
> And heath-bells bud in deep Glencoe,
> And copse on Cruchan-Ben;
> But here, above, around, below,
> On mountain or in glen,
> Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
> Nor aught of vegetative power,
> The weary eye may ken.

But austereness, too, has its place, and often is to the mountains what fertility is to the fields, not a blemish, but a glory; and if grey crag[19] and wild hillside bear no visible fruitage, yet many are the spiritual crops which may be gathered from them by the understanding eye and mind.

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Some centuries ago the Lake District, as Wordsworth has remarked, "must have been covered with wood to a great height up the mountains, where native Scotch firs must have grown in great profusion, as they do in the northern part of Scotland to this day"; and he quotes a traditional saying that a squirrel might have travelled from Wythburn to Keswick without touching earth. In Wales the same conditions once existed, and Pennant, in 1773, referred to the earlier destruction of the oak forests which had clothed the upper dales. "Avarice," he wrote, "or dissipation, and its constant follower, poverty, have despoiled much of our Principality of its leafy beauties." We can no longer say of Snowdon or of Helvellyn, as of Mont Blanc, that "around his waist are forests braced"—even miniature forests—but a closer knowledge will teach us that the hillside, even when barren of vegetation, is never barren of charm, and it may be that these mountains have gained as much as they have lost by the change. Certainly there is a keen pleasure to the climber in standing free of all entanglement of trunk or thicket on the bare and open fells.

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Not that the mountain is often a mere treeless and shrubless waste, for in some places, on the lower slopes, there is a thick ground-growth—carefully shunned by the traveller, but rich and beautiful in itself—of heather, bracken, and bilberry, and there are not a few spots where the flanks of the hills are a very wilderness of intermingled crags and brushwood, ancient lurking-place of "mart" or fox, but rarely if ever trodden by foot of man. When these fail, there may often be seen a line of stunted yews, or hollies, or junipers, straggling up the slope, or a mountain-ash jutting out slantwise from the side of some narrow ravine and almost bridging the watercourse. The bilberry, like the heather, is at times found growing at great heights, especially in the rockier and less accessible places, such as the sides of Tryfan or Scafell Pike, where it flourishes amazingly in some seasons and produces berries of giant size.[20]

Not less delightful is that close-fitting vestment of the hills, which follows so faithfully each ripe curve and contour, and so trimly encircles the projecting bosses of rock—the short crisp sward, on which the mountain sheep have their pasture. Even the stoniest tracts are softened, here and there, by these verdant interspaces, and it is refreshing to see a steep saddle of turf flung across a craggy ridge, or a streak of greenery running far down, like a path, among the grey and pathless screes. These grass banks are in parts notched and graded into a kind of natural stair, easy to climb and luxurious to descend; elsewhere they have a smooth and glassy surface which in dry weather becomes highly polished and rather treacherous to the feet.

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Very inviting, too, are the narrow winding tracks, models of skilful engineering, which sheep and shepherds between them have worn along the slopes—slender thoroughfares which often skirt the fells for some distance at the same level, and offer a less toilsome footing to those whose course is round some projecting bluff or hollow combe. A terrace-road, where one has a steep rise on one side and a steep drop on the other, is always a delight, even when one's terrace is but a tiny sheep-path of a few inches' width; nor is there any need to go to show places, such as the so-called "Precipice Walk" at Dolgelly, for a sensation which can be enjoyed in abundance on any unfrequented hillside.

But let it be supposed that verdure of any kind is lacking, and that we stand face to face with an expanse of bare cliff and scree—such as the south face of the Great Gable—the solid cliffs rising above, and the broken screes streaming downward and outward from their base. Here is barrenness indeed, yet a barrenness which, to the lover of such solitudes, is more fruitful than the choicest vineyard or cornfield. For how weird and suggestive is this stationary rock-fall of screes, this stony glacier arrested in its flow, yet retaining in its stillness something of the undulant shape! Viewed from across the glen, it looks like a great "tongue" of rocks lolling out from the mouth of the gorge many hundreds of feet above, and gradually widening in its fall; at closer quarters, it presents itself as a tolerably compact mass of individual boulders, none of any great size, across which it is necessary to pick one's way with some deftness, because, like Wordsworth's cloud, it "moveth altogether if it move at all," and a floundering step may set half

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the hillside creeping daleward.

It is centuries, no doubt, since these detached stones fell from their holdings, and they are themselves for the most part weather-worn and sun-stained like the parent crags, but they are still occasionally reinforced by new outcasts, when some exposed layer of rock has become disintegrated by winter frosts and rains; and then the story of the latest landslip is written visibly for several years in the paler hue of the screes and in the discordant rift in the escarpment. As a rule, falling stones, so great a danger in the Alps, are rare among our mountains; once or twice in a season, perhaps, you may see, or hear, a big stone go thundering down the hillside when no human agency has been at work. [Pg 105]

I refer to human agency, because the mention of falling stones reminds me of the now disused sport of crag-bowling. The rolling of stones down mountain sides, still a recognized method of warfare among hillsmen, has rightly been anathematized in this peaceful country since rock-climbing became popular; but in the old days, when no one went on the crags, it was a harmless and diverting practice. Thus Gilpin, in his travels among the mountains of Cumberland, a hundred and thirty years back, remarked how the native children amused themselves in this manner; and Bingley, describing his ascent of Tryfan some half-century later, observes: "We stood on a mere point, and on each side of us was a precipice more deep than any I had before seen; we united our strength, and rolled down it several huge pieces of rock." Forty years ago it was common to see guides and tourists assiduously engaged in the sport, the process of which was somewhat as follows. Having first selected a steep "scar," or a grass slope, with a pool if possible at the foot of it, and having made sure that neither man nor sheep was in the line of fire, the party turned their attention to some "huge stone," as Wordsworth has it,

> Couched on the bald top of an eminence,

and expended such energy as they had to spare in detaching this rock from its station, until it slowly toppled over, gathered fierce speed, went smoking and crashing down the hillside, and buried itself with a wild plunge in the waters. Such was the pastime, a sort of vicarious glissade, and from my own bygone enjoyment of it I have been led to hope that the famous "labours" of Sisyphus, who, according to the old Greek legend, was condemned in Hades to roll a large block up a hill only—only!—to see it roll down again, were not quite so cheerless a form of punishment as poets have feigned. The self-imposed labours of the tobogganist seem to belong to the same class. [Pg 106]

But if any reader thinks that so dangerous a game as crag-bowling ought not to receive even this faint retrospective approval, let me add, as a warning, that I know one pilgrim who, for his former indulgence in it, sometimes pays the penalty in dreams. He has loosened, maybe, from its high parapet some monster of a rock, in weight and girth far exceeding any upon which he ever laid waking hands, and no sooner has he launched it on its mad career than he remembers with horror unspeakable that there is a cottage in the glen below—even now he sees its chimneys as the crag goes thundering towards it, and he awakes in remorseful agony at the sickening thud upon the roof.

From the loose screes we turn naturally to the stone walls, where some at least of the scattered blocks have found lodgment and reconstruction. So familiar are these walls to us, and so closely associated with the hillside itself, that they seem to be a natural part of it, as the bridges of the valleys, and one would not willingly miss them from the bare landscape. It is rather surprising, indeed, to find De Quincey speaking of the "sad injury" done to the beauty of a mountainous country by its stone walls; for to some of us the stone wall has a more native charm in such districts than any quickset hedgerow could have: it has often furnished us with a shelter in storm, a shade in heat, a lunching and a siesta-place; we love it, too, as the haunt of our mountain companions, the wheatear and the rock-ousel. The scaling of a seven-foot wall, when the top stones have become insecure, may present some difficulty to the novice, and it is then that he is glad to find one of those convenient loop-holes or rather sheep-holes, through which, after temporarily removing the door-stone, he may insinuatingly worm himself. On some of the lower slopes, especially among the foot-hills near the seacoast, these walls are often of huge girth and solidity, and, being overgrown and intertwined with numberless ivies, mosses, and lichens, have a rare and peculiar beauty; but the increasing use of barbed wire, as an adjunct or substitute for the walls, is yet another sign of the vandalism which in so many ways is working havoc among the hills. [Pg 107]

But of all the treasures of the hillside the brightest and purest are its water springs, sources of those many Welsh "afons," and English "gills" and "becks," whose beauty might convince the most hardened and sceptical of town-dwellers that the Naiads were something more than a dream. Follow one of these swift mountain rivers, such as the Cumbrian Esk or the Cambrian Llugwy, or better still, perhaps, one of the lesser and more headlong freshets, from its deep pools and rock-basins in the lower valley to its birthplace under the heights, and you will marvel at the prodigality of its charms—so deliciously do the waves come dancing and singing down the slopes in a succession of hidden falls, no two of which are alike, or in an open cascade of white foam, such as often wins for such streams in the Lake District the name of "Sour Milk Gill"; and at last, as the current dwindles, you will trace it to some brimming tarn, or to its high fount in green mosses among the rocks, or will possibly lose it underground, where it may be heard bubbling and gurgling below the stones in its invisible cradle. [Pg 108]

These becks, it must be remembered, unlike the turbid snow-fed torrents of Switzerland, are as clear as crystal, so that in calm weather you may see every pebble at the bottom of the pools, and

the trout poised with waving fins; but after a heavy rainfall, when the streams are in “spate,” it is often no easy matter to ford them, for then the merest runnels, across which you step to-day without hindrance, may to-morrow be a raging flood. On the other hand, there are times, though much less frequent, when the smaller streamlets are withered up under a spell of summer heat, [Pg 109] and their dry channels are useful only as a stone staircase for the climber, who in such seasons may become acquainted, as never before, with the feeling of thirst. I think the sorest temptation I ever underwent, without succumbing to it, was when, on my first visit to Scafell Pike with two fellow undergraduates, on a burning August day, we found a jug of claret-cup left to keep cool, in the spring above Esk Hause, by a party which had trustfully preceded us to the summit. It must have been owing to some morally bracing influence in the high mountain air that that cup was untouched by us: had we been subjected to the same ordeal on the banks of the Cam, it seems but too certain that not one drop could have been spared.

The mountain tarns, in which many of the becks have their origin, lie for the most part in hidden recesses, unsuspected from below, under the crowning heights, and mark the beginning of the last stage in the ascent. It is rather curious that the older school of nature-lovers should have felt themselves disposed to melancholy rather than to joyfulness amid such scenes; even Wordsworth speaks of a “not unpleasing sadness” as naturally induced by the sight of these pools, and surmises that “the prospect of a body of pure water, unattended with groves and other cheerful rural images by which fresh water is usually accompanied, and unable to give [Pg 110] furtherance to the meagre vegetation around it, excites a sense of some repulsive power strongly put forth.”[21] Here is a strange relic, in the mind of a great modern poet, of the medieval sense of antagonism between man and nature: we now think rather of these remote tarns as wells of life and healing, to be repaired to by the pilgrim who needs refreshment and comfort in the jostling conflict of mankind.

With the features which I have mentioned, the barren hillside is not likely to lose its attractiveness for nature-lovers. A wilderness it may be, but of a sort which brings to mind the rapt words of the poet—

Oh, wilderness were paradise enow.

[Pg 111]

VII
Slag-Heap or Sanctuary?

Mountains have in all ages given asylum to free races. Has the time come when a free race must give asylum to its mountains? If we are to have any voice in the answer, the question is one which, in this country at least, cannot much longer be set aside; for though the encroachments of “civilization” on wild Nature have been more or less discussed since the famous “Tours” of Thomas Pennant created the modern tourist, and sent him roaming through the hills, the problem of how to preserve our mountain scenery—if we wish to preserve it—has become much more pressing with the great industrial development of the past hundred years, and it is no exaggeration to say that if it is not solved within the next half-century there may be no mountain scenery to preserve.

It is not to be doubted that, as civilization advances, mountain districts, like all other wild districts, must be gradually “opened out,” and made to minister more fully to human wants; but, then, what *are* those wants, and how can they best be gratified? The man who owned the goose [Pg 112] that laid the golden eggs wanted golden eggs, but his too hasty method of opening out the goose defeated the purpose he had in view. In like manner, if we want to make our mountains more serviceable to the people, we must think whether the methods which we are at present adopting will conduce to that end. Look at the working of these methods among the Cambrian and Cumbrian hills.

Snowdonia has long been a sufferer from foreign and native aggression. It is said that Edward I, to celebrate his conquest of Wales, held “a triumphal fair” on Snowdon, in open defiance of the national sentiment by which this peak was held as holy as was Parnassus by the Greeks. What is more surprising is that the Welsh themselves have in later times so fully acquiesced in the defilement of their sacred mountain, and that the present plight of Snowdon would seem to be a pride rather than a shame to them; for all earlier outrages sink into nothingness when compared with the work of the past fifty years. The copper-mines in Cwm Dyli, which have been worked, and neglected, and worked again, have greatly defaced the mountain, have poisoned the waters, and submerged the islands of Llyn Llydaw, once the haunt of the sea-gull; but it was not until the railway was built from Llanberis, and an hotel placed on the summit, that irreparable harm was done by deforming the natural shape of Y Wyddfa, the topmost peak, into a dull, blunted cone. [Pg 113]

Take the case of the River Glaslyn, which flows from the heart of Snowdon through Cwm Dyli and Nant Gwynant, till it finds its way by the Pass of Aberglaslyn to the sea. Visitors are often invited to admire the “power works,” erected a few years ago at the head of Nant Gwynant, and other signs of enterprise; but from the nature-lover’s point of view, there is a different tale to tell, for the glorious waterfall, through which the stream dashed headlong from Cwm Dyli, has been replaced by a line of hideous metal pipes, by which the whole hillside is scarred. As for the far-famed Pass of Aberglaslyn, defaced as it is by railway works and tunnellings, remorselessly begun and then temporarily abandoned, its state can only be described as one of stagnant

devastation.

It is a curious fact, too, that this greed for exploiting the natural scenery of Wales goes hand in hand with a complete neglect of such legitimate and really useful means of utilizing the tourist-season as the erection of signposts, and the maintenance of bridle-paths and mountain-tracks, which, without disfiguring the scenery, are of great service to walkers.

Such is the latter state of this Welsh mountain, of which it used to be said that "whoever slept upon Snowdon would wake inspired." The inspiration which to-day awaits those who wake upon Y Wyddfa is the sight of a hostel "standing where it ought not," with the usual appurtenances of civilization—post-office, railway-station, refreshment-rooms, cigar-ends, urinals, hordes of trippers, to whom the mountain means no more than the pier at Margate or the terrace at Windsor—almost everything that is civilized except a police-station, and who knows but even that may come? If there is still any "beauty born of murmuring sound" among the dwellers on Snowdon, it must be born of the slow-panting locomotive, or of the gurgling of whiskies in the hotel. And the view? In clear weather, we are told, it embraces the coast of Ireland. I have seen it embrace a line of "washing," hung out to dry on the edge of the Glaslyn precipice. [Pg 114]

In Cumberland, thanks to the efforts of a few faithful defenders and the powerful sentiment aroused by the Lake poets, there has been much less desecration, and the recent attempts of vandalism on these remaining strongholds of Nature have been mostly repulsed; indeed, it might be thought that the immediate danger in this quarter comes in part from overzealous friends, and that it is time a limit were put to the well-meant but mischievous practice of building memorial tablets in record either of personal associations or of fatal accidents. That the guide-books should tell us how Scott's "pilgrim of Nature" lost his life on Helvellyn, and how Matthew Arnold took a meditative walk there, is well enough; but to erect stones in memory of these events, and marble crosses on the various spots where rash cragsmen have fallen, seems rather indiscreet; for it is not fitting that a wild mountain should be plastered, like a lecture-hall or a cemetery, with epitaphs and inscriptions. [Pg 115]

But it must not be supposed that Lakeland has not suffered even as Wales has done, though in a less degree, from the ravages of commercialism. Coniston is a sad proof of the contrary, where that once beautiful mountain, the Old Man, has been so ruined by the copper-mines that, as has been said of the gold-fields of Colorado, "the hills have been flayed of all their grass and scalped of all their timber; they are scarred and gashed and ulcerated all over from past mining operations—so ferociously does little man scratch at the breasts of his great calm mother when he thinks that jewels are there hidden." I was told by Ruskin, whose windows at Brantwood looked westward across Coniston Water to the Old Man, that he thought the very sky above the mountain-top was poisoned and clouded by the mines.

Take the case of Thirlmere, too, that once wild and winding tarn, so narrow at the middle that it was spanned by a rustic bridge, but now enlarged into a Manchester water-tank. It is true that in this case—unlike the majority—a useful purpose was attained; but are we to believe that the *general* interests of the country are promoted by such feats of engineering, by which Thirlmere was "improved" into what we now see it—a formless sheet of water, with a large dam at its lower end, some ornamental water-works on its banks, and a few submerged homesteads below its waves? No wonder that the coachmen who ply between Keswick and Grasmere are never weary of pointing out to the passengers these triumphs of human skill. And now Haweswater is to suffer a like fate. [Pg 116]

The desecration of our mountains is but part of the widespread contempt for natural scenery which may be seen from end to end of the land; but it is among mountains, where Nature is at her wildest, that it strikes us the most. From what filthy-mindedness comes the strange conviction that a clear, swift stream is the right and proper receptacle for the rubbish of human homes?[22] I know a Welsh village, the type, alas! of many villages in Wales, and elsewhere, in which from the houses built on the steep bank of a pure mountain torrent there dribbles down into the river a tributary river of filth—dust, broken bottles, paper, old boots, decaying vegetables, and all kinds of refuse—for thus it is that the country-folk muse on the gifts of Nature,

And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

Nor is it only on the natives of these districts that such reproach must fall; for, unhappily the state of some of the well-known peaks and gullies, both in Wales and Cumberland, proves that many visitors also forget their duties to the hills. I have seen the famous Needle Gully, on the south flank of the Gable, literally lined with sandwich-papers and other mementos of climbing parties, whose members would be ashamed to treat St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey with the like disrespect; and if the skilled cragsman can be guilty of such sacrilege, can we hope that the ordinary tripper will be more reverent in his ways? [Pg 117]

Such acts are at least indications of a barbaric mood in the public mind, which, when expressed in the form of commercial enterprise, is capable of wreaking more damage on the mountains than a waterspout or an earthquake; and the question presents itself: Will this mood pass or be abated before a fatal mischief is done? For bad as things are now, there may be worse to follow. "Thank God," said Thoreau, "they cannot cut down the clouds." But can they not? With aeroplanes once perfected, will not the cloud, that "mountain o'er a mountain," share the fate of the hills? No mountain, assuredly, will escape. "As to the loftiest peaks of the Andes and Himalayas," said Reclus, "too high in the regions of cold for man to go to their summits, the day will come when he shall be able to reach them. Balloons have already carried him two or three thousand yards high;

other aeronauts will bear and deposit him on Gaourisankar, as far as the ‘great diadem of the dazzling heaven.’” [Pg 118]

The danger lies not so much in the accessibility of cloud or mountain as in the reckless and irreverent spirit of the man who attains them. To soar to “the great diadem” is no harm; but if we turn the great diadem into a great muck-heap, shall we be the gainers by our flight?

Nor is it only the mountains that are being ruined by man’s brutishness; the extinction of the wild life of the mountains is also threatened. It has to be remembered that these remote ranges are almost the only haunt where certain rare animals can still, to some extent, hold their own. Scarcely more than a hundred years ago the eagle was breeding in Borrowdale, as it still breeds in parts of the Scottish Highlands; and whether the present century shall witness the extermination of the buzzard, the kite, the peregrine, the raven, and other rare species, must depend partly on the protection afforded them by law against the sporting naturalist or “collector,” mainly on the preservation of the mountains themselves from the commercialists’ greed. Shall we ever have the wisdom to make each such district into an asylum for bird and mountain alike? At present the lover of wild Nature, himself somewhat of a *rara avis*, must be thankful for what is spared in his time; but it is his duty to think of the future also, and to avert, if he may do so, the ruin which he clearly foresees. [Pg 119]

We come back, therefore, to the question whether we wish to hand on these mountains to our descendants as mountains or as something else. For if we allow our company-promoters to carve and tunnel the crags, to enlarge and discolour the lakes, to poison the streams, and to drive away the wild life from the hills, are we not once more killing the goose that laid the golden eggs? These hills of ours are small as compared with the great mountains of Europe, but they are as beautiful, and they are unique, and once ruined they cannot by any ingenuity be restored. It is true that Switzerland is employed in the same manner in spoiling the Jungfrau and Mont Blanc, but it must be remembered that Switzerland has a practically unlimited reserve of Alps, while we have but few mountains to spoil.[23] At present they are still something more than a playground for gymnasts, or a picnic-ground for tourists; they are mountains, a piece of unsophisticated wild Nature in our midst, and as such, their value, to those who know it, is beyond words. Let them still be a playground and a picnic-ground by all means, but under such conditions as will preserve their native features and their higher character. One would think that a nation which can spend thousands of millions on a foreign war might afford to become the owner of its own mountains at home! [Pg 120]

The pretence that there is something selfish and anti-democratic in the desire to save our mountain scenery from destruction is absurd; on the contrary, it is entirely owing to its devotion to the fetish of “property” that the public has so long allowed these places to be exploited for private gain, and has stood by in utter apathy and indifference while a handful of speculators and traders have benefited at the expense of the community. Nor do we give to our mountains even that protection which other antiquities enjoy. What would be said if a Bill were submitted and passed in Parliament to authorize some private company to pull Westminster Abbey or Stonehenge to pieces and make a profit out of the ruins? It is no exaggeration to say that the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments would have the whole nation at its back in its resistance to such vandalism; yet a mountain such as Snowdon is a far more ancient monument than Stonehenge or the Abbey, and the vandalism which is now being successfully accomplished is of a still more insensate kind.

It is a hollow fallacy, too, to suppose that it is “democratic” to fill up and destroy the rare silences and solitary spaces that a land may still possess, on the plea that they cannot be enjoyed by all. They *can* be enjoyed by all who are fitted to enjoy them, and the benefits that result from such enjoyment are in the long-run shared by all the nation alike. To make a railway to the top of a mountain such as Snowdon, and then to argue that it is a blessing to the weakly folk who could not otherwise get there, is to overlook the fact that it is not to the cripples, but to the community, that the mountain belongs. “Whatsoever,” says the communist Reclus, “may be the future of man, or the aspect of the world which he may create for himself, solitude, in that portion of Nature which is left free, will become more and more necessary to those men who wish to obtain renewed vigour of thought, far from the conflict of opinions and voices. If the beautiful spots of the world should one day become a mere rendezvous for the worn and weary, they who love to live in the open air will have nothing left them but to take refuge in a bark on the midst of the waves.... Happily the mountain will always contain the sweetest places of retreat for him who flies from the beaten paths of fashion.” [Pg 121]

Wherein, then, lies the remedy for the dangers which I have described? Within recent years there has been much rejoicing over the rescue of two or three estates in the Lake District, such as Catbells and Gowbarrow, from the clutch of the speculator, and all honour is certainly due to those by whom these victories were won; but it is evident that large sums of money cannot for ever be raised by private subscription to buy off the day of doom, and that while one favoured tract is being thus protected, another less fortunate one is being lost. We cannot save our mountains by these piecemeal purchases from the harpies who threaten them; such methods are too troublesome, too costly, too purely local to be successful in the main. There is only one thorough solution of the problem, and that is to nationalize such districts as Snowdonia, Lakeland, the Peak of Derbyshire, and other public holiday-haunts, and so to preserve them for the use and enjoyment of the people for all time. If parks, open spaces, railways, tramways, water, and other public needs can be municipalized, why not mountains? It is impossible to over-estimate the value of mountains as a recreation-ground for soul and body, yet, while we are awaking to the need of maintaining public rights in other directions, we are allowing our [Pg 122]

mountains—in North Wales and elsewhere—to be sacrificed to commercial selfishness. If Snowdon, for instance, had been purchased by the public twenty years ago, the investment would have been a great deal more profitable than those in which we usually engage; but while we are willing to spend vast sums on grabbing other people's territory, we have not, of course, a penny to spare for the preservation of our own.

What we need, in short, is the appointment of mountain sanctuaries—highland parks, where the hills themselves, with the wild animals and plants whose life is of the hills, shall be preserved in their wildness as the cherished property of the people—consecrated places, where every one shall be entitled to walk, to climb, to rest, to meditate, to study Nature, to disport himself as he will, but *not* to injure or destroy. When we truly care for these hills of ours, we shall remove them from the tender mercies of the mine-owners and railway lords, who now seek profit in their disfigurement, and shall place them under a council of mountaineers and naturalists and nature lovers who understand and reverence them, with the instruction that they shall so administer their charge as to add to the present happiness and the permanent wealth of the nation. How long will it take us, hag-ridden as we are by the nightmare of private ownership, to awake to the necessity of such a change?

Pending that blessed time, I would point out to those public-spirited rich men (and we know there are such) who are ever looking for some useful outlet for their wealth, that here, in the shadow of this storm-cloud that overhangs our mountain scenery, they have a golden chance of ennobling themselves; for it is simple truth that the millionaire who should buy a Snowdon, and make free gift of it to the people, would be a benefactor for all time, and would far outstrip in lasting philanthropy any donor of churches or charities, hospitals or libraries, scholarships or seats of learning. For mountains are the holiest ground that the heart of man has consecrated, and their educating influence is even more potent than that of books; they are the true authors, the standard works, printed in the most enduring type, that cheer and brace, as no written words can do, the minds of those who study them.

In what state, then, shall we hand on to those who follow us these sacred temples of Nature, which, as even so old-fashioned a writer as Wordsworth asserted, are "a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy"? The day cannot be far distant when our choice must be made, and it is between a sanctuary and a slag-heap that we must choose.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] *The Cambrian Sketch Book*, by R. R. Davies.

[2] *Rambles among the Mountains, Valleys, and Solitudes of Wales*, by J. H. Cliffe, 1860.

[3] "The simple people who till the soil of Westmorland and Cumberland cannot view in any other light than that of childish 'laking' the migrating propensities of all the great people of the south who annually come up like shoals of herrings from their own fertile pastures to the rocky grounds of the north."—*De Quincey.*

[4] The very word "to climb" is beginning to be appropriated by the gymnasts, in whose records we find mention of meetings with "non-climbing parties" at the summits. Scott's verse, "I climbed the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn," will evidently have to be rewritten.

[5] See the well-known lines in Scott's "Helvellyn":

> "Dark green was that spot mid the brown mountain-heather,
> Where the Pilgrim of Nature lay stretched in decay."

[6] Dr. G. A. Selwyn, then Bishop of Lichfield.

[7] "I suppose that I feel the same awe when on their summits that many do on entering a church. To see what kind of earth that is on which you have a house and garden somewhere, perchance! It is equal to a lapse of many years. If you have been to the top of Mount Washington, let me ask, what did you find there? Going up there and being blown on is nothing. We never do much climbing while we are there, but we eat our luncheon, etc., very much as at home. It is after we get home that we really go over the mountain, if ever. What did the mountain say? What did the mountain do?"—*Thoreau.*

[8] Captain Cameron, of Glen Brittle House, Isle of Skye.

[9] The expression was used in E. D. Clarke's *Tour through Wales*, 1791.

[10] The word "glidder" is given in the *English Dialect Dictionary* as meaning a loose stone. Cf. the line in Scott's "Shepherd's Tale": "Among the glidders grey."

[11] "I ken the place, as mony does, in fair daylight, but how to find it by moonshine, amang sae mony crags and stanes, as like to each other as the collier to the deil, is mair than I can tell."—*Heart of Midlothian.*

[12] A proof of the sentiment attaching to Snowdon may be found in the number of counties which claim to have a distant view of it from their own highest points; we are told, for example, that it can be seen from the Worcestershire Beacon, at Malvern, across nearly

a hundred miles of hill and plain. From what I have been able to discern of the Welsh heights as viewed from the hills of Shropshire, at a range of about fifty or sixty miles, I suspect that "Snowdon" must often be understood as a generic term, and that outlying summits such as the Arenig Fawr, near Bala, sometimes do duty for their chief.

[13] *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes*, 1823.

[14] W. Gilpin, 1786.

[15] See *Climbing in the British Isles*, by W. P. Haskett Smith, i. 86.

[16] Cf. the name of the well-known Nant Ffrancon, meaning "the Valley of the Beavers."

[17] W. Gilpin's *Observations on the Mountains of Cumberland*, 1786.

[18] See an interesting article on "Wild Goats in Wales," in *Country Life Illustrated*, March 2, 1901. Also Mr. J. G. Millais' *British Mammals*, iii. 213.

[19] "Probably these crests of the earth are for the most part of one colour in all lands, that grey colour of antiquity which Nature loves; colour of unpainted wood, weather-stain, time-stain; not glaring nor gaudy; the colour of all roofs, the colour of things that endure."—Thoreau, *Journal*, x. 452.

[20] For a description of the flowers of the fells, I may be permitted, to refer the reader to my book *The Call of the Wildflower*, which contains chapters on the flora of Snowdonia and Helvellyn.

[21] *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes.*

[22] In the good old days it must have been a practice to build privies actually *over* small streams, as may be seen from ruins near disused cottages in Wales and Cumberland.

[23] There is an English branch of the League for the Preservation of Swiss Scenery, which has powerful support. Does not charity in this, as in other matters, begin at home?

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ON CAMBRIAN AND CUMBRIAN HILLS: PILGRIMAGES TO SNOWDON AND SCAFELL ***

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