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A WINTRY WALK
AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

—♦—
WITH SINCEREST APOLOGIES TO THE SHADE OF HIAWATHA.
—♦—

LONDON:
F. B. KITTO, 5, BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT.
1867.

EXPLANATORY.

THE following lines contain an accurate account of what befel the writer during a ramble, on May 13th, 1867, over the summit of Glyder-fach and down by Llyn Bochlwyd to Llyn Idwal, returning by Twll-du and over Glyder-fawr, to Pen-y-gwryd.

Weather, densely overcast and strong gale from E. ; reached the clouds and newly-fallen snow at about 2,000 feet above sea level, and had the company of both to the summit, a further height of 1,200 feet. The air temperature in the valley had fallen twenty-five degrees since the evening of the 11th.

From several aneroid readings, the writer suspects Glyder-fach, the Lesser Glyder, to be at least equal in height to Glyder-fawr, i. e. to rise 3,275 feet or more above sea level ; and from Snowdon the former looks considerably the higher.

H. B. BIDEN.

WITTON, BIRMINGHAM,
JUNE, 1867.

A WINTRY WALK AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

—♦—
Scene—THE HEART OF SNOWDONIA.

MAY 13TH, 1867.

—♦—

Reader, let a rambler tell you,—
One who oft, the storm defying,
Converse lone has held with Nature
In her grandest, sternest aspect,
'Mid the crags of wild Snowdonia,
Or, with pleasantest companions,
Scaled her lofty peaks and ridges
Oft by roughest, untried circuit,
One incurably afflicted
With "~~cacœthes scandendi~~" *cacœthes*—
Though he ne'er beheld the wonders
Of the far-famed Alpine ranges ;—
How, this day, alone, he wandered
O'er the newly snow-crowned mountains—
Winter's snows had gone in April,
Spite of *Post*, *Gazette*, or *Record*.
Senseless work, would say the Guide Books,—
Sapient, cockney-followed Guide Books,—
Yet most useful to the novice,
Thus "*without a guide*" (!) to wander,
Courting well deserved destruction !
How he scampered o'er the quagmires,
How he floundered through the Gwryd,

More correctly called the Mymbyr,
 Slipping off the treacherous boulders ;
 Scrambled up the Lesser Glyder
 Spite of clouds, of snow, and easter.
 Wind beloved (?) and sung by Kingsley ;
 Would that he could thus have felt it
 Freezing his poor toes and fingers.

Reached the drifting, level, cloud-roof,
 Plunged behind its dim grey curtain
 Darkly stretched o'er lakes and valleys,
 Blotting out all higher regions,
 Hiding every well known landmark ;
 Reached the eighteen-inch-deep heather
 Water-logged with snow half melted,
 Half way up the lofty mountain ;
 Onward, upward, floundering, scrambling,
 Through the fog and furious east wind,
 Steering now by faith and compass,
 Reached unmitigated winter ;
 Clambered up by blocks and ledges
 O'er the frozen cliffs and boulders ;
 Gained a loftier, colder region,
 Where the gale made wildest music
 Howling o'er the crested ridges,
 Through the obelisks and turrets,
 Serried battlements and cannons,
 Dimly seen through drifting mist wreath,
 Outworks of the storm-rent summit :
 Wondrous handiwork of Nature,
 Nought like this is seen on Snowdon,
 Though each scene alike be snowed on !

Reached Castell-y-gwynt, whose crags were
 Pointed, edged with fairest frostwork ;
 Frozen mist, on blocks and ledges—
 Silvery plumage, icy feathers,
 Pointed bristling *to* the tempest ;
 Hung with icicles of crystal
 Glittering bright in rows and clusters
 From each point and "coign of vantage."

Reached the lofty rock-strewn platform,
 Where the snow lay thick around him,
 Where the great Stonehenge-like ruins,
 Ruins of no human structure,

Lichen-marbled, snow-besprinkled,
Looming spectral through the cloud-rack
In their ever changing groupings,
Stood or leaned in solemn grandeur.

Porphyritic trap their structure ;
Trap indeed the writer found it
Once, too far the crags descending
Northward from the lofty summit
Recking not of cliffs beneath him ;—

Novice then at mountaineering,
Yet compelled by his position
Down that wall of rock to scramble
To Cwm Bochlwyd's deep recesses,—
Down, by clefts and narrowing ledges
Through the haunts of kite and raven.

Reached the pointed sharp-edged cap stone,
Bright with snow and silvery frostwork,
Thickly fringed with icy pendants,
Gleaming through the mist like daggers.

Crossed the rugged pile of "ruins,"
Summit of the lofty mountain ;
Reached the rocky steep o'erlooking
Tryfan's cone of blocks and pillars,—
Deep Cwm Bochlwyd's wild recesses,
All concealed in clouds beneath him :
Whence the ravens' dismal croaking
Echoed from the crags of Tryfan
O'er the hidden deep abysses
Reached his ear, in sudden chorus
Piercing through the eddying vapour,
Ravin' loud in expectation,
Scenting, may be, feast most welcome,
Should the wanderer's ice-numbered fingers'
Losing hold on crags or boulders,
Send him headlong down among them.
Corresponding members doubtless,
Of that "Red-tarn Club," so famous
Once, as holding nightly revel
In the wilds of far Helvellyn,
(Till disturbed by "Mister Wudswuth")
O'er the bruised and mangled body
Of the luckless Obadiah !
(See Chris. North his "Recreations.")

* * * *

How, his purpose now accomplished,*
 O'er the mountain crest returning,
 Feet and fingers numbed and senseless
 Struggling with the furious easter
 And its six degrees of freezing,
 Underneath his chin he carried
 (Load unwonted for the season,
 On this thirteenth day of fifth month)
 Frozen mist, an icy burden
 Hanging to his draggled whiskers,
 Till each patriarchal "Billy"
 In the depths of lone Cwm Bochlwyd,
 In that rugged grey-goat valley,
 Might have owned him as a brother ;
 But, alas, the goats have vanished !

Passed again the "Tempest's Castle,"
 Where on high, in snowy mantle,
 Fringed and edged with frosted lacework
 Stood the "Sentinel" gigantic,
 Lonely ward and vigil keeping
 Through the heats and frosts of ages
 By the rugged block-strewn glacis
 O'er the lofty *Col du Gribin*.

Floundered down the narrow couloir,
 Waging cool war with the snow drift
 By the eastern flank of Gribin,
 Whose arête of stony columns,
 Though by Ordnance-map constructors
 Hardly indicated, rises
 Rough with crest of spiny fretwork
 (If the fog would let one see it !)

Gained the scree, so loose and shelving,
 Down the rugged steep descending.

Reached Llyn Bochlwyd's sparkling fountain,
 Dripping well of clearest water
 Where the crystal streamlets trickle
 From the high-ranged porph'ry columns,
 From the cliff so grim and barren
 Northwest face of Lesser Glyder
 Down the screen of richest verdure ;
 Golden rod and scented rose root,
 Mountain rue, and kidney sorrel,

* Fixing a minimum thermometer among the rocks.

Ladies' mantle, starry cresses,
 Golden saxifrage, and mosses,
 Glancing bright in silvery ripples.
 Welcome sight when heats of summer
 Parch with thirst the mountain climber ;
 Beauteous now with fairest frost-work
 All enframed in purest snow-wreath ;
 Forty-two degrees its waters
 Now, as in the heats of August.

Lost at length the whitened snow-field,
 Left behind the realm of Winter,
 Lost awhile the piercing east wind
 In the lee of rugged Tryfan ;
 Left above, the drifting vapour ;—
 Saw the snow-crowned Carnedd Dafydd
 Clear awhile from gloom and tempest ;
 Saw Llyn Ogwen's rippling waters
 Fifteen hundred feet beneath him ;
 Saw the lengthening vale of Francon
 Bask awhile in pleasant sunshine ;
 Hastened down to ice-ground Bochlwyd
 (See Professor Ramsay's "Glaciers :"—
 No connexion here with *Murray* ;
 Safe in print the writer had it
 In the "Brum. Gazette" of August—
 Of the twenty-fifth of eighth month—
 Eighteen hundred four and sixty.)

Reached Llyn Bochlwyd's sheet of silver ;
 Stood beside its lonely margin
 Sometimes reached by roving angler,
 Scarcely known to guide-book maker,
 Scene but rarely seen by artist ;
 Stood awhile, the view surveying.

Wild and gloomy frowned the valley,
 Dark beneath its roof of vapour
 Stretched across from peaks to ridges,
 From sharp Tryfan's headless shoulders
 To decapitated Gribin ;
 While the crags of Lesser Glyder,
 Seamed with lines of white, descending
 Glacier-like from cloud-hid snow fields,
 Closed the darksome rugged picture.

Glorious are these lofty mountains

Scarred with precipice and cavern
 In the full revealing sunshine
 Of the pleasant days of summer ;
 (All untrod by highway tourist
 Only bent to "do" the country)
 Yet *most* glorious, when the sunset
 Breaking through departing tempest
 Floods with sudden, radiant splendour
 (Golden lights and ebon shadows)
 " Castle " pinnacle and " turret "
 On the lofty crested ridges ;
 While the lazy snake-like cloud-wreaths,
 Rank by rank in long procession,
 Stained throughout with evening's purple
 Crawl athwart their lofty shoulders,
 O'er the dim retiring valleys
 Grey with cliff-entangled mist beds.
 " Scene of sternest desolation ; "
 Yet, amid its barren grandeur,
 Gems of loveliest tint or verdure
 " Waste on desert air their sweetness. "—
 (Reader, please forgive this rendering
 Of a somewhat well-worn passage.)
 Oft they smile in welcome beauty
 On the mountain rambler's footsteps :—
 Parsley fern in ell-broad masses,
 Dots the screes with tufted clusters ;
 Mountain thrift, the sea-green rose-root,
 Gnarly rooted, golden blossomed,
 Star, and mossy saxifrages,
 Bladder fern in brittle lace-work,
 Alchemilla, mountain shield fern,
 Oak and beech ferns, stemless catchfly,
 Golden rod, the pale green-spleenwort,
 Fringe with green the rocks and ledges,
 Line the mossy caves and crannies ;
 While the bristling, bright fir club moss,
 Sturdy little mountain climber,
 Though it not disdains the valleys,
 Dots with life the loftiest ridges ;
 Or its grey-green Alpine cousin
 Struggles through the close cropp'd herbage ;
 Or vivip'rous Alpine grasses
 Wave in air their tufted offspring

Held aloft on wiry foot-stalk ;
 Or, in damp and sheltered corners,
 Golden saxifrage encases
 Rocks and stones with richest carpet :—
 “ Common ” plant, but yet how lovely
 Glimmering blue-green in the darkness
 Deep within some dripping cavern,
 Roofed with darker olive fringes
 Of the filmy fern of Wilson ;
 Chiefly found in wild luxuriance,
 In the darksome damp recesses
 Of the huge and loose-heaped fragments,
 Relics of moraines, dissected
 By the hidden, tinkling streamlets ;
 Or in more illumined aspect,
 Spangled with the snowy blossoms,
 Gold besprinkled, emerald tufted,
 Of saxifraga stellaris.

(Ending now this long digression,)
 On again the rambler started,—
 Scrambled down to well known Idwal,
 (See Smith's, Brown's, or Jones's guide-books ;)
 Many a hundred feet descending
 To Llyn Idwal's southern angle ;
 Thence by the moraine so rugged
 Up the centre of the valley
 Tow'rd's the distant “ Devil's Kitchen,”
 Gaping high in air before him ;
 Onward, upward, climbing, scrambling,
 Round or o'er the ice borne fragments.

* * * * *
 Hark, what sudden, sharp crack-crackling,
 Like the sound of rifle volley
 Or the snap of *closest* thunder,
 Swelling now to noise “ uproarious,”
 Echoes round the rock-walled valley ?
 Is His Sable Highness cooking
 In the gloomy cleft up yonder ?
 Has his kitchen *biler busted* ?
 Whence can come such startling clamour ?

See, *from out* yon crown of vapour
 Resting on the lofty mountain,

Lines of dust, with seeming slowness,
 (Strange effect of height and distance,)

Creeping down that steep escarpment,
 Glyder-fawr's north-western angle ;
 Gleaming now with sudden radiance
 In the level sheet of sunshine
 Streaming 'neath the drifting cloud roof,
 From Elidyr's lofty shoulder
 O'er the twilight darkening valley ;

See, from out the lowering columns
 Right and left, the glancing fragments
 Leaping, crashing o'er the ledges,
 Hurling down the loosened boulders,
 Now with headlong speed descending,
 Score the cliff with lines of ruin :
 Nearer, sharper, grows the tumult,
 Louder, grander, roar the echoes,
 Till the rushing, stony torrent
 Clattering down by scree and gullies,
 Spent and worn, has found its level
 All its noisy life departed.

On again the rambler struggled,
 Reached at last Twll-du's dark fissure,
 Tempting spot to plant collector ;
 (See the trusty " Guides " aforesaid.)
 Yet one little floral beauty
 Well deserves a passing notice ;—
 Purple saxifrage ; its blossoms,
 Soon as winter's snows have left it
 Rosy-tinting rocks and boulders
 On the old volcanic ash beds ;
 Loveliest little Alpine creeper,
 With its slender thyme-like branches
 Threading all the rocks with crimson.

Looked into the " Devil's Kitchen,"
 Too much water, now, to enter,
 Though the writer oft has clambered
 Up the fallen blocks and ledges
Ad sanctissimum sanctorum,
 Underneath the fallen boulder ;
 Whence, on looking back, the landscape,
 Lake and mountain, bright in sunshine,
 Seen along the darksome crevice,

Framed between its gloomy portals,
Startles with its golden radiance ;
Like the light of moon or planets
Yellow in the midnight darkness.

—Climbed to Llyn-y-cwn's morasses,
—Saw the dim grey sea horizon
Faintly gleaming o'er Carnarvon,—
O'er the tower of Penrhyn Castle
Down Nant Francon's long perspective ;
Saw in faintest ghostly outline
Moel Eilio's grassy summit
O'er the lakes of deep Llanberis ;
All things else in mist were shrouded.

Scrambled on by screes and ledges,
Near a thousand feet ascending
Up the slope of Esgair-felen
To the brow of the Great Glyder.

Reached again the drifting cloud roof,
Reached once more the reign of Winter,
Faced again the piercing easter
With its six degrees of freezing ;
Crunched again the frozen snow sheets,
Half a foot in depth, new-fallen ;
Hastened on again by compass
Through the all-encircling mist wreaths,
(Centre of a faint horizon
Scarce a hundred yards in compass),
Through the gathering shades of evening,
O'er the lofty rock strewn platform ;
O'er a mile of stony desert,
Sharp edged shingle, "snow-denuded."

Now, a howling wintry desert,
Tempest-ridden, fog enfolded ;
Yet, in brighter, clearer weather,
Scarce you'll find a nobler station
Whence to view the lofty Snowdon :
Whence to see the mountain monarch,
Whence to watch the changing colours
On his peaks and winding ridges
In some clear north western sunset
Of the longer days of summer ;
When Crib-goch in fiery radiance
Glows along each stony saw crest,

Down each scree, with streams of orange ;
 While Cwm-glas in deepening shadow
 Veiled with haze of grey and purple
 Dimly shews its tiny lakelets
 Dark with rock-reflecting shadows
 O'er the gorge of deep Llanberis :
 And Y Wyddfa, " the conspicuous,"
 Towering high, in gilded outline,
 O'er Crib-ddysgyll's darkening ridges,
 Crowns the scene of mountain glory.

Lost in distance man's "improvements,"
 All unseen, those huts unsightly,
 Yet most welcome to the climber,
 Faint or thirsty with his scramble
 Up some rugged mountain buttress :—

Up Cwm-dyli's "rush of waters,"
 By the knife-edged crest of Lliwedd,
 Up the cliff from Bwlch-y-saethau :—

Up the screes, from Cwm-y-clogwyn,
 Up from Cwm-y-llan's recesses,
 To the "Saddleback's" *dread* (!) shoulder,
 Scene of regulation terrors !—

O'er Crib-goch's spiky ridges,
 O'er its wearying screes unstable,
 Each loose stone a "friction-roller"
 Set with knives of flinty sharpness,
 Roughest peak in all Snowdonia ;
 From Cwm-glas' deep recesses
 By the spiny crest of Ddysgyl.

(Routes most dangerous ! most improper !!
 For the guideless mountain rambler.)

Why deform a spot so glorious
 As the crested cone of Snowdon
 With excrescences so hideous ?
 Wooden shanties, roofs of patchwork,
 Rusty funnels, empty bottles ;
 Why not build in style substantial
 Honest stonework, plain yet sightly,
 In some neighbouring sheltered hollow ?
 Leaving free the narrow summit
 For the crowds who come to study
 (*When the drifting mists allow them*)
 Scenes of oft recorded beauty.

* * * * *

While (to Glyder fawr returning)
Snowdon's lengthening three-forked shadow
Leaps Llyn Gwynant's silvery mirror,
Stalks across the wood crowned valley,
Climbs the slopes of Cerig Cochion.

And the Glyders' gloomy profiles
Slowly creep up sunlit Siabod.
Stain his golden-glowing shoulders
With their deep embrasured outline.

While the Lesser Glyder's ridges
Cut the sky with crested ruins.
Wondrous mountain architecture
Shining bright in level sunlight.

Or, perchance, in broken weather,
Scenes below, in fitful fragments,
Lake and streamlet, rock and woodland,
Here and there by turns emerging
From the snowy, rolling vapour
Shine revealed in sudden clearness :

While the sea-horizon, gleaming
Far and wide in radiant silver
Floods the distant scene with beauty,
Mottled o'er with flying shadows,
Snowy cloudlets, floating islands,
Gliding o'er its shining level.

While, around, the parting mist-wreaths,
Lingering yet, in playful wanderings
Race along the rocky desert,
Round its pinnacles and turrets.

Or some sudden pelting shower
Sweeping o'er the lofty ridges
Gilds the scene with new-born lustre
Flashing in the fitful sunshine ;—
Floats away o'er sharp-coned Tryfan—
Wreaths his head with sudden glories,
Radiant circles, full orb'd rainbows,
No mere lowland " arch triumphant,"
Each concentric ring, completed
In the yawning depths of Bochlwyd,
Standing forth in fairest colours
From the dark, retreating nimbus.
While old Snowdon's western shoulder
Ploughing up the sea borne currents

Into higher, colder regions
 Forms a train of sweeping cloudlets
 Visibly increasing, growing
 Out of evening's purest ether ;
 Till the long cascade of vapour
 Streaming o'er his pointed summit,
 Gliding down Cwm-dyli's hollow,
 Floats across the vale of Gwynant ;
 Vainly struggles, hither, thither,
 Stands in heaps o'er Pen-y-gwryd,
 Tangled in the threefold eddy
 Streaming up, from deep Nant Peris,
 Round from Gwynant's curving valley,
 O'er the slopes of Gallt-y-wenallt.

Sight of snowy sunlit beauty
 To the rambler far above it ;—
 Source of discontented grumbling
 To the helpless "walking tourist"
 Buried 'neath its surging billows,
 Coffee room imprisoned, fearful
 Of the mountain mist or tempest ;
Weather-bound, the silly fellow,
 Ignorant of scenes so glorious
 On the lofty crests above him.
 Thus in plaintive doleful numbers
 Pouring forth his lamentation.

LAY OF THE IMPRISONED TOURIST,

AS HE LAY "USED UP" ON THE SOFA,

Stranger, who by love for mountains
 E'er shouldst chance to be allured
 To this den of dreary horrors,
 Soon your weakness will be cured :
 All the skies in cloud extinguished,
 All the earth by mist obscured,
Imps cerulean, dismal vapours,
Reign supreme at Pen-y-gwryd !

Here the heavens are ever pouring
 Drenching streams from fog-bank lurid :
 Tears of sympathy incessant
 Angels high in ether pure hid
 Weep for us, poor luckless captives,
 In this wretched place immured.
 Traveller, that's the reason why it
 Always rains at Pen-y-gwryd !

Walker ! Mr. Walking-tourist,
 Fudge and nonsense, cease your growling ;
 Off with those eternal slippers ;
 Out, and scramble up the mountains ;
 Burn that fossil, last week's paper,
 Last resource of mind most wretched,
 Come, and soon will soul and body
 Rise superior to the *vapours*.

Come, and see what glorious pictures
 Nature shews, in ceaseless beauty,
 To the thoughtful, loving student
 Of her ever-changing features,—
 Not forgetting Nature's Author,
 'Mid such tokens of His power,
 (With all reverence be it spoken),
 In whose hands are earth's deep places,—
 Whose, the strength of hills and mountains,—

Whose the sea is, for He made it,—
 Who the outspread land created :—
 Whose, are Earth and all her fulness,
 Hail and lightning, snow and vapour,
 Wind and storm, His word fulfilling,—
 Ministers that do His pleasure.

* * * * *

Yet what strange ironic contrast
 To all sunny recollections
 Was the scene, this wintry evening,
 On the crest of lofty Glyder !
 Howling tempest, whirling vapour,
 Piercing frost, and crunching snow-wreath.

Reached at length his eastern shoulder,
 Hastened down once more from cloudland ;
 Saw the face of Llyn-cwm-ffynnon
 Shine like silver far beneath him—
 Welcome landmark through the twilight.

Passed the darkened cliff of greenstone,
 Reached the doubly ice-grooved platform,
 Witness strange, of two-fold glaciers ;
 Hastened down by *roches moutonneés*,
 'Mid *blocs perchés* by the hundred ;
 Passed the spring-fed Llyn-cwm-ffynnon,
 Where of late the char have flourished ;
 Hurried on, well nigh belated,
 Scrambled down, in almost darkness,
 Gained the road at lone Gorphwysfa,
 Pen-y-pass, of late its title ;
 Pen-y-"pass !" a mongrel nickname
 Cymru should be all ashamed of.

Nothing loth, reached Pen-y-gwryd,
 Ever welcome Pen-y-gwryd !

Thus did end an eight hours' ramble
 All alone, across the mountains ;
 (No one else would face the weather)—
High-away-there ! o'er the Glyders.