



OVER THE ALPS ON A BICYCLE

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WITH PICTURES BY JOSEPH PENNELL.

THE START.

WE did not think we were original. Other great people had crossed the Alps—Hannibal with elephants, Cæsar in a litter; and according to David and THE CENTURY poster, Napoleon pranced over on a white charger; according to Daudet, Tartarin fell over. Armies have crossed, and diligences loaded with Cook's tourists pass every day, and cyclers, too. True, the name of the first man to climb the Alps with his bicycle has not been recorded; and, much as we should like, it is useless to pose as pioneers.

Along good roads or vile *pavé*, up hill and down, through rain and sunshine, we bumped or glided from Dieppe to Dijon, with hardly a pause save to eat or sleep. When we came to the summit of the hill down which you coast eight kilometers into Dijon, we should have seen the Alps rising on the horizon, as they do in theatrical drop-curtains and on Turner's canvases; but factory smoke and mist wiped out the distance. Up and down we rode to Dôle, and, in the footsteps of Ruskin and of cycle tourists, and in our own,—for we had been there before,—we went to the little park that was to afford us a panorama of peaks and precipices. Instead, we found the view washed out by rain. Our landlady consoled us by the assurance that after rain, if you got up early enough, you could see the white range quite clear against the sky. In the morning there was blinding yellow light everywhere, but not an Alp.

OUR FIRST PASS: THE COL DE LA FAUCILLE.

UP and down for another day we rode, and then we were well in the Jura, on our first pass, the Col de la Faucille. How much we had heard of that pass!—how steep it was, how terrible the three kilometers at the top! To mount them, we ate two breakfasts, one after the other. The French customs officers at Les Rousses bade us an «Excelsior»-like adieu as they stamped our machines, and, in

the wheel-tracks of a Swiss from Geneva, the number on his bicycle waving gaily behind him, we began to climb. It was not long, however, before even I caught up to him; and he addressed me, with what breath was left him, almost in the words of Longfellow—not exactly

Beware the pine-tree's withered branch!
Beware the awful avalanche!—

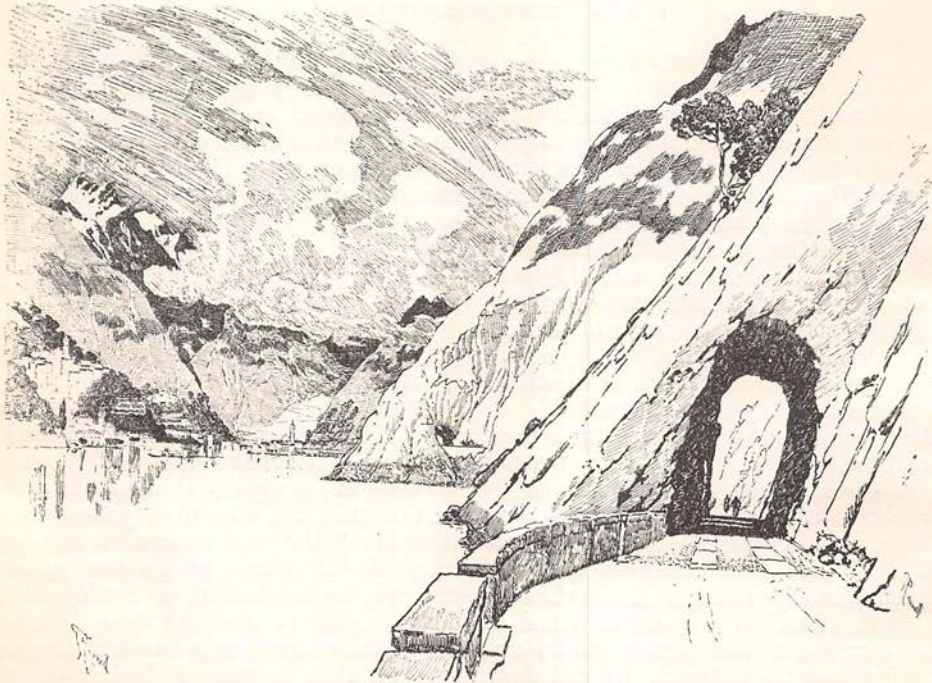
but, «Look out mit dem lest t'ree kilometer. He shteeep.»

The Swiss, by riding very hard, got ahead of us. We did not hurry much, but we hurried him. We rode on, and we rode on, and we rode on, gradually climbing, he puffing all the while like a small steam-engine, until suddenly the road became flat and began to go downhill, and, with a final grunt of triumph, he tumbled off, and said, «De Col de la Faushille!» And this was a Swiss pass! Why, I know hundreds of hills that are worse; and yet, when we came to look in our Baedeker, we found we had climbed, without feeling it, 4356 feet.

As we started down, the Swiss cyclist called after us: «Haben sie ein vary gut brack? For sie mussent zuruck pedallen, and it is besser ein pine-tree après soi de trainer!» We got on; we pumped up our pneumatic brakes; we back-pedaled hard. And then we remembered there was a view. We jumped off and looked. The road zig-zagged down the mountain-side; pine forests grew toward heaven; a flat, gray-green streak of country stretched away below; a whitish line filled the distance; and instead of Ruskin's star-girt, glistening-white, village-crowned, glacier-bound chain of Alps were only vast cloud-banks. So we pumped up the pneumatics again, and began our ride down. The road was broad and beautifully engineered, for we were still in France. When I reached the first curve I had a bad time. The road doubled straight back on itself; on one side the pine forest, on the other a drop of some

thousand feet. Every yard or so was a stone post just high enough to hit my pedal (to save me from grim death). I steered from the precipice, and tried to come around with the dignity that befits my twenty years of cycling. But the road was not banked up. I ran into the gutter, and sat down in the bushes. I picked myself up, and looked over the side. Half a dozen zigzags below was

years, and we found a perfect coast. There were only two interruptions: one at Gex for lunch, and a second at Sacconex, that the thrifty Swiss government might extract from us eighteen francs for the privilege of coming into the country and spending about eighteen hundred. You may cycle, without let or hindrance from the authorities, in every part of Europe except in the two



GOOD BICYCLING BESIDE LAKE COMO (SEE PAGE 844).

J., coasting like mad, foreshortened so that I could see only the top of his head. He approached a curve. As he turned it, he leaned right over the precipice. He took his hands off. Heavens! was he falling? No; he was lighting his pipe. I rode for a while in a most ladylike manner; but after half a dozen turns, by keeping my pneumatic on, by strenuous back-pedaling, and by turning as short as possible at the curves, there was no trouble. The gradient was not very steep, and it became easier where the road wound back and forth and round and about among the foot-hills. Never once, however, did I let the machine go. We both put our faith in the pneumatic brakes, and with our feet on the rests we coasted delightfully. Once we beheld, in a cloud of dust away above us, the Swiss, a pine-tree tagged to his wheel, wobbling down with difficulty. We had heard of the terrors of this pass for

petty divisions known as Belgium and Switzerland.

After an unnecessary delay of at least half an hour, no sooner did we escape from the custom-house than we came to bad roads.

FROM GENEVA TO CHAMONIX.

FROM the frontier we rode on to Geneva, and, all expectation, wheeled down the long street at the end of which, according to the photograph shops, Mont Blanc rears its head so proudly. But Mont-Blanc was not there. To be quite sure, we took the highest room in the swellest hotel looking toward where it ought to have been. But it remained invisible; and, leaving Geneva, we wheeled along the road immortalized by Tartarin. We bumped through Bonneville, behind which Turner saw the whole chain glittering. But, then, we know that Turner had the indepen-

dence to see nature as he wished to see her, and not as she is; and, to my knowledge, Mont Blanc never does make a background for Bonneville. And now, as we mounted, raindrops fell, and at last, as we plowed our way between the brakes loaded with tourists, the clouds emptied themselves in one steady downpour. We pegged on through the rain to Cluses; but our ardor, like ourselves, was dampened. At a tiny wayside inn, where we saw a bicycle, we stopped. Draggled, muddy, sodden, we went inside. I asked a man standing there for a syrup, which a woman brought. «You are English,» the man said, but in French. My patriotism rose: I even forgot the new tariff. «No,» said I; «Americans.» «Ah,» said he, «you know, then, of course, l'ambassadeur des États-Unis, M. Vitlau Ride. Me,» he said, smiting his breast—«in '89, it was I who was the president of the Paris Municipal Council, and it was I myself who bestowed upon your great country the statue of Liberty Enlightening the World!» I had made a mistake. He was not the keeper of the café, but a distinguished storm-stayed traveler. By the time we had settled with him the affairs of the universe, the rain had ceased, and we started again, slipping and skidding as well as we could into Sallanches, where, though we had not meant to, we had to stay, for the rain came down harder than ever. Mountains? Why, you could barely see across the street.

And the next morning there were no mountains. There was scarcely any road. There was nothing but mud. We climbed up and up, by the baths of St. Gervais, by Le Fayet. Farther on, as we came out of a little tunnel, the Alps exposed themselves suddenly, as they always do. A break in the clouds, and Mont Blanc, with all his great white chain, glittered before us—a sudden, sensational burst of indescribable Alpine glory!

OVER THE TÊTE NOIRE.

WE arrived at Chamonix at noon. As there are no passes in the town, we left, after lunch, on good roads,—for we were again in France,—for our second pass, the Tête Noire. We rode to Argentière, and then we did not ride any more. We walked, and we shoved, and we pushed through the mud and the mist, till it seemed to me we must have climbed as high as the top of Mont Blanc. We left the trees; we came up to the snow, into the region of glaciers and icy precipices; but we never mounted above the tourist-line. A constant procession was coming over, on

horseback, in carriages, on mule-back, on foot—among these, a couple of cyclers whom we knew from afar to be countrymen of ours. We knew it by their hats, and by the fact that their coats were off.

A coast followed the climb, and we sailed down a splendid road, traversed a deep gorge, and flew across the flimsiest of bridges. There the good going ceased; the kilometer stones stopped; a customs officer rushed out. We were in Switzerland again, and at once on bad roads. Though the road to the Swiss frontier is excellent, and though we could perceive no difference in the quality of the rain on the two sides, the road from the frontier to Martigny, gorgeous and grand in scenery, is one of the vilest in Europe, outside of Cornwall, and, when we went over it, the muddiest.

All I shall say about the Tête Noire as a pass is, if you are cycling, avoid it. It is the worst in the Alps, quite unridable, as a whole, in either direction. When you think you have got to the top beyond Argentière, you only drop down again. Then you climb up, through tunnels, to the Tête Noire hotel, only to drop down to Trient; and then you have the stiffest climb in Switzerland. As we pushed and panted through Trient, I heard a woman, from over her wash-tub, call out to her neighbor that it must be very painful to travel like that. It was painful. It would have been easier to carry our machines than to push them from Trient to the Col de la Forclaz—an ascent that ought to make me an honorary member of the Alpine Club. The descent was worse. The short zigzags were ankle-deep in mud; the clouds were as thick as a London fog, and presently they dissolved in torrents of rain. But after a while the rain stopped, and the clouds lifted, and the Rhone valley unrolled itself like a map below. The road, when it finished zigzagging and joined the highway to the St. Bernard, was a trifle better and still downhill to Martigny. We coasted from here, and presently we met, toiling up on his bicycle,—and he had not yet divined the character of the pass, poor man!—a lone black figure, hat in hand. As he came near, he raised his head, and in well-known accents we heard, «Say, how 's the road for Shamminy?»

A LONG PUSH UP THE SIMPLON.

AT Martigny we went to the French Touring Club hotel; and that night no fewer than nine Americans turned up, all awheel. Save for one party of three, and ourselves, the

rest rode alone, were unknown to one another, and were all going in different directions. The English cyclist boasts a good deal of his prowess, and his rides, and his times; but, though we were five weeks riding over the Alps, we did not meet a single Englishman on a bicycle.

The next afternoon we started for the Simplon. We followed the straight road up the Rhone valley. As is the way with Alpine valleys, it is shut in by high mountains which shut out the view, it is infested by tourists, and it is fearfully hot. The road is bumpy; there is a gradual rise, but only at the upper end are there any hills worth speaking of. We got to Sion, to Visp, to Brieg; and the next morning were ready for our first great pass by eleven, when we ought to have been at the top. A blazing, blinding hot sun was shining; and the road, which began its climb in a businesslike way from the very middle of Brieg, beyond the town, was shadeless, and deep in dust. On the lower green slopes the heat was so fierce that the perspiration rolled in great drops from our faces, and the machines were like fire to our touch. We had to stop every few minutes to cool off; and once we clambered over a fence, and lay full length under a tree, watching the diligence come down in thick clouds of dust, and a cyclist following, at a speed that would have whirled him into eternity but for the special providence that watches over the foolhardy wheelman as well as over the drunkard. Back we went to the road, pushing and plodding until it left the slope to zigzag through woods that were no protection against the sun, pushing and plodding until it skirted the bare mountain-side, pushing and plodding ever higher and higher, until we stopped, in sheer exhaustion, at a solitary house—the Second Refuge, provided by Napoleon—to eat our third substantial meal that day. (It is amazing how much you can eat when you are crossing a pass.) Then we kept on winding along the brink of the precipice, now with a gradual ascent, and for a while we rode, and could have ridden farther if only the Swiss knew how to repair the road as well as the French engineers knew how to build it. Then we crossed a bridge, and climbed steeply to Berisal, and more steeply still, and interminably beyond. The diligence overtook us, and we watched it crawling on, disappearing round a turn, and reappearing farther up, still crawling, but now like a big fly in a crack on the slopes. And we pushed and plodded past the Fourth and Fifth refuges, while, away below and behind us, Brieg kept falling

lower and lower and growing tinier and tinier. And we pushed and plodded—until my shoulder ached with the perpetual pushing, and my feet were like lead—to where a great glacier came flowing over the mountains, and patches of snow whitened the rocks above the precipice to our right, and the road escaped into covered galleries from the waterfalls that dashed and roared down all about it, now and then breaking even into the tunnels and giving us a shower-bath as we passed; and we pushed and plodded on to the Sixth Refuge, and out upon a sort of open moorland. We were at the highest point of the pass, 6595 feet above the sea. We had climbed fifteen and a quarter miles from Brieg, and steadily for seven and a half hours, to get to the hospice. If Napoleon put it there to shelter the weary traveler, no one had a better right than we to beg a night's lodging. I was never so dead tired in my life.

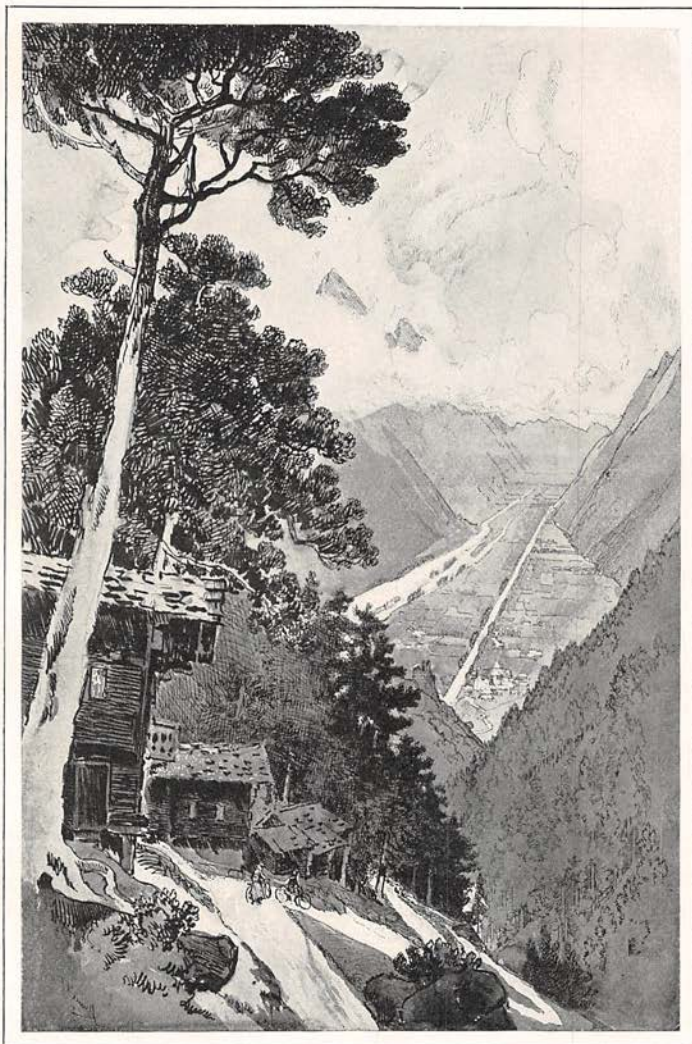
A WELCOME AT THE HOSPICE.

WE rang the bell. A nice old monk came to the door, hurried us in, gave us time only to carry the bicycles up the steep flight of steps into the hall, and led us straight, hot and dirty as we were,—he would hear of no washing,—into a big dining-room, where he and three other monks had just begun their supper. Down we sat with them. It was an excellent meal. I have seldom tasted better *vin ordinaire*. But the monks were abstemious, and we had not the courage of our appetites. I would rather, however, share a light meal with the monks of the Simplon than dine with the fifty or sixty tourists you find any summer evening at the St. Bernard. But then, the St. Bernard is no better nowadays than a *pension*; while the Simplon is still a genuine hospice, where you are not merely given food and drink and a bed, but are entertained by the monks as if it were their pleasure, not their duty. The tourist, as a rule, sleeps in Berisal or the village of Simplon. With the first breath of spring, the migration of Italian workmen begins—*les hirondelles d'Italie*, the monks called them. When we came down-stairs, after supper, a long row of these swallows were perched on the low stone wall opposite the hospice.

We slept in a large, airy bedroom where the furniture, like the building, dated back to the First Empire. Before we went to bed, a cart-load of peasant women and a couple of nuns had been deposited at the door; a jaded, dusty man on foot, with a great pack on his back, had dragged himself up the

steps; and the diligence from Domo d'Ossola had dropped a man with a boy, and a youth with a bicycle (that is the proper way to cycle up a pass). The monks received everybody simply, without a word, without a question. But there is to be a railroad under the

farther on—an additional proof of Napoleon's good sense in choosing the present site. You do not know what a great man he was, even if you have read Professor Sloane, until you have gone over the Alps on a bicycle. But Napoleon's cleverness seemed



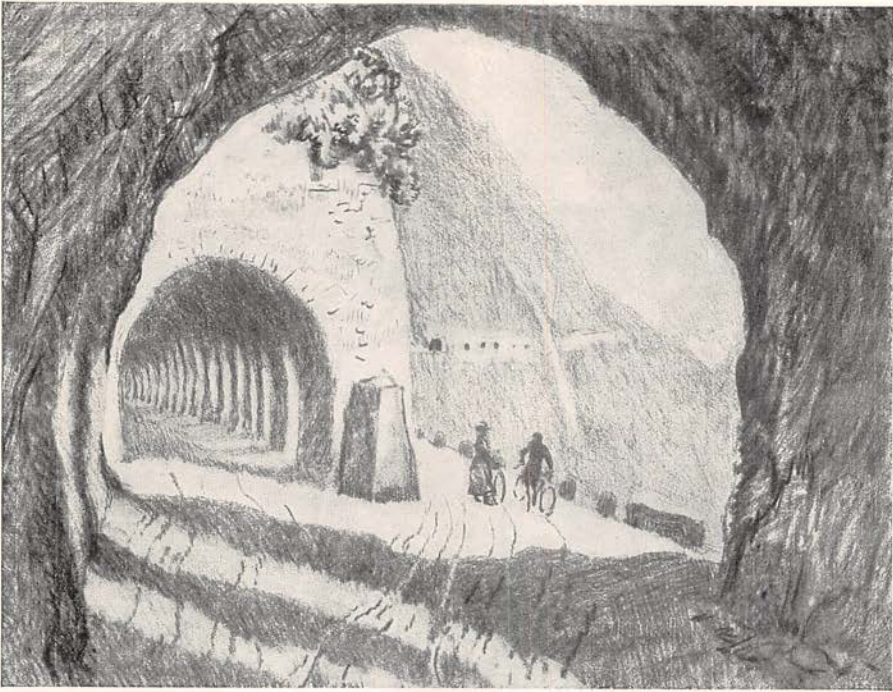
THE RHONE VALLEY, FROM THE TÊTE NOIRE.

Simplon; and the Swiss will rejoice, no doubt, when they have lost one of the few genuine things left to them.

COASTING INTO ITALY.

It was bitter cold in the morning, an icy wind blowing over the glacier, and snow all about us. We passed the old deserted hospice, a grim, weather-beaten stone house with a tower, in a more exposed position a little

nothing to mine when I put my feet on the rests and coasted down the road he hung in mid-air. The pneumatic was pumped up tight, and I held the front brake by means of an ingenious and simple device with a leather strap, that left some power and feeling in my right hand and arm. For kilometers, with only occasional intervals of back-pedaling, I coasted after J. down the side of the mountain—down the long zigzags, where the driver of the diligence, with un-



TUNNELS AND GALLERIES ON THE SIMPLON.

expected courtesy, gave me the inner, which was the wrong, side of the road (but then he was an Italian), through the ravine of Gondo, with waterfalls booming above and the stream thundering below, and the road crossing and crossing again over airy bridges, and clinging to the side of the precipice, and diving into dark tunnels, and taking sharp turns around walls of rock just where carriages were creeping up—to the Swiss frontier, where the customs officer forced back our money upon us. We wished to wait until we left Switzerland for good and for all. But he said—and, as a Swiss, he must have known—that we had better take it when we could get it. And we coasted down through the pines, down through the chestnuts, into a land of vineyards and tropical heat, when little more than an hour before we had been shivering. At Isella was the Italian custom-house, where the officer did not browbeat us, but understood at once that the signor and signora were travelers, and, for a franc and a half, presented us with a document big enough and ponderous enough to have seen a whole army through the country.

«DOT AND CARRY ONE» TO COMO.

LIKE Heine's Philistine, I began to sing my little «ti-ri-li» of exultation to find myself

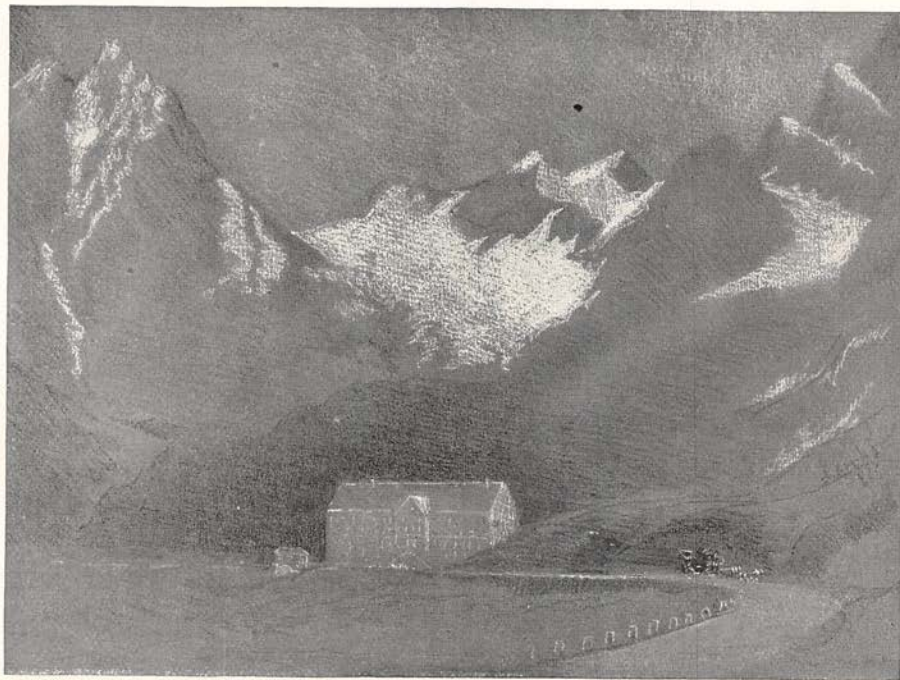
in Italy again. It seemed to me the sky was more tender, the landscape more luxuriant, the people more graceful, than ever. I was thinking out an elegant phrase for my notebook, and attempting to pass a cart at the same time, when, the first thing I knew, the bicycle stopped in deep sand at the side of the road, and I went over in front, and the back wheel of the bicycle went under the cart, and there I was, miles and miles from a repair-shop, with the rim bent out of shape, the wheel buckled, and the frame twisted! In fact, the machine looked more like the folding bicycle of the French army than the one I had been riding a second before; and I thought I should have to carry it to the nearest railway-station, which was I did not know how far away. But J. took hold of it, shook it viciously, kicked it, pulled it about, and it recovered itself almost miraculously—all but the rim. It was ridable, but I went with a limping, «dot-and-carry-one» action which was as quaint as it was unusual. The next party of Americans we met shoving up thought it was some strange foreign invention, and said so. However, I managed to ride to the wonderful turn in the road that gives that first perfect view of the valley, on to Domo d'Ossola for lunch, on across the valley, fighting a mad wind, on round the shores of Lago Maggiore, on to Baveno.

Across the lake, at Intra, was a factory with a mechanic clever enough to put a new rim on an old wheel. This was the one big smash of the ride, and it happened, not on a pass, but on a nearly level stretch of road.

As we had journeyed half across Europe not to go around lakes, but to ride over the Alps, and as Italy was as hot as a furnace, we took a boat to Laveno, rode the short distance to Varese and Como,—the population in the villages mobbing us just as in the days when we wheeled our tandem through Tuscany, a primeval episode which we related in *THE CENTURY* for March and April, 1886,—and at Como we took another boat up the lake. We chose this route to the Splügen to see if Como was really as romantic as our sentimental grandfathers have told us. But, when we started, what I saw was J., in his shirt-sleeves, rivers of perspiration streaming from his face, up to his elbows in a bucket of water, hunting for a puncture in his tire, which had collapsed the minute we came on board. To judge by the passengers, however, he was far more entertaining than the lake. They crowded about him, and wanted to know all about it, and what he did with the pneumatic brake, and why he had a gear-case and various other intricate things, just when the bicycle was upside down, and he had both hands and the tire plunged in the water.

And there was not a puncture to be found; yet no sooner was the tire pumped up than it collapsed again. It was maddening. We landed at Varenna, and took the bicycle to the local blacksmith, at whose door hung the sign of the Italian Touring Club. But apparently the Italian club gives its sign to any one who fancies it as a decoration. The result was that, in the morning at dawn, J. was on his way by boat to Como and a repair-shop. It was three in the afternoon when he got back to Varenna with a new valve,—for it was the valve, and not the tire, that had gone wrong,—and we could start for our fourth pass.

Waiting on the wharf, when we landed, were two women with bicycles—the only two we met touring, from the moment we left Dieppe until, five weeks later, we reached Calais. I do not count a big German *Frau* in knickerbockers, with many bangles (what the English call a «fringe-net») over her elaborately curled front hair, and a pistol and a sketch-book at her waist, who, with hands in her pockets, swaggered about the boat going up the lake. I should have had to see her on a machine to believe in her. The other two were Americans, though one was disguised in the green Austrian mountain dress, and a green felt hat to match, with two cock's feathers stuck in it. They also were doing



HOSPICE ON THE SIMPLON.



THE MOUTH OF THE SIMPLON, LOOKING TOWARD DOMO D'OSSOLA.

the Alpine passes, they said; they had already carried their bicycles through the Tyrol in the train, and had walked up and down the Maloja Pass. We did not have to tell them what we had done; they knew. They had read that CENTURY article, and remembered it. The one in green came running back to tell us so. It may have been foolish, but we liked her for it.

MOUNTING THE SPLÜGEN.

FROM Varenna to Colico we found eighteen kilometers of perfect road, keeping close to the lake, tunneling its way through the rocks where a less skilful engineer would have sent it winding over the mountains. It was much less easy going from Colico to Chiavenna, where the long climb up the Splügen begins. We were called at five the next day, and were off by six, to get to the top in the cool of the morning. There was no sun, but the valley was already hot and close with the mugginess of a coming storm. We had to walk

almost at once. I suppose that, without luggage, and if we had taken our time to it, we could have ridden up this or any one of the great passes. But we carried luggage, and plenty of it. Besides, on the Splügen we could always see the stiffer climb ahead of us. It was cruel, the way the road seemed to brag of its steepness. We could watch its course for kilometers through the valley, as it mounted and mounted, in tier above tier, through gallery above gallery, in places like a series of terraces cut in the rock, with no trace of the windings that connected them. Little footpaths ran straight up the mountain, sometimes in long flights of steps; waterfalls crashed and tumbled in endless white lines down precipices; campanile-crowned villages perched on dizzy heights. We ate a second breakfast at Campodolcino, and doggedly trudged on, now through a thick, cold, wet mist. Clouds blotted out

the valley, the opposite mountains, everything but the windings and zigzags of that terrible stone parapet. And, to make matters worse, the wet and the steady up-grade between them brought on a cramp in my leg, and every time I put my foot to the ground the pain cut like a knife. The kilometer-stones showed how slow our pace was, and tall poles, the use of which we did not understand, threatened unknown dangers. But I doubt if I realized the misery of that tramp until a bit of fairly level road gave us a chance to ride, when the riding along a slippery track, with my mackintosh flapping about me, and water dripping from my hat into my eyes, seemed heaven by contrast. We managed to keep on our machines as far as the Italian custom-house, where we delivered our papers, and ate our lunch in a little close, dark café with a wonderful collection of old hats, and men under them. After that there were three more kilometers of zigzags, and clouds, and mud, and sappy green slopes,

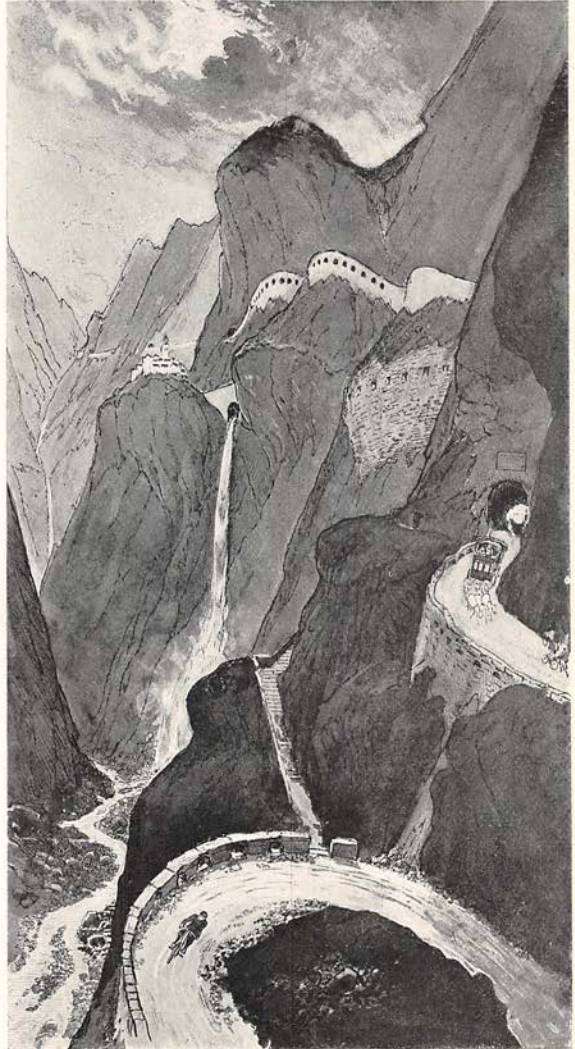
and it could not have been gloomier. We passed a wretched stone hut used as a shelter for shepherds, then the hospice, which was tight shut, and finally, at a height of 6946 feet, two poles marking the frontier. Immediately and abruptly the descent began, and we were on a bumpy, ratty road with no kilometer-stones, no poles, no parapet. The zigzags were the steepest, and the curves the sharpest, we had yet encountered, and for me there was little coasting down the Splügen. I cannot say which was more alarming—to be riding on the zigzags, or to be looking down upon them as they lay there, with J., always ahead, leaning out over the edge at a blood-curdling angle.

THE SAN BERNARDINO.

At Splügen we were driven into the Swiss custom-house, and kept there kicking our heels for an hour and a half, for no apparent reason except to make us feel at home in Switzerland again. After that, we kept on up the valley to Hinterrhein, and in the morning, long before the sun was above the mountains, we were on the San Bernardino. A pass a day was now our average—an average that Hannibal, or Napoleon, or Tartarin might have been proud of. As at Hinterrhein we had already reached a height of 5302 feet, according to Baedeker, there were only 1466 feet more to the top of the pass. But if it sounded a trifle after the tramp of the day before, it meant, after all, ten kilometers of steady shoving. And how those first zigzags through the dense pine forest lengthened themselves out when we were on them! And how aimlessly and indefinitely the road above the tree-level seemed to be trying to run around itself over the rocky plateau! And how hot the sun was by the time we had reached the hospice and the lake at the summit! And there was no mistaking the seriousness of the San Bernardino as a pass when we began to descend. Three mountain-sides of zigzags were waiting for us, one immediately below the other. The first was all stones and tourists. The Swiss, with their usual ingenuity, have decided that the foreigner must work as well as pay his way over the Alps, and so they repair

their roads, which means dumping down cart-loads of stones anywhere and anyhow, in August, at the height of the season.

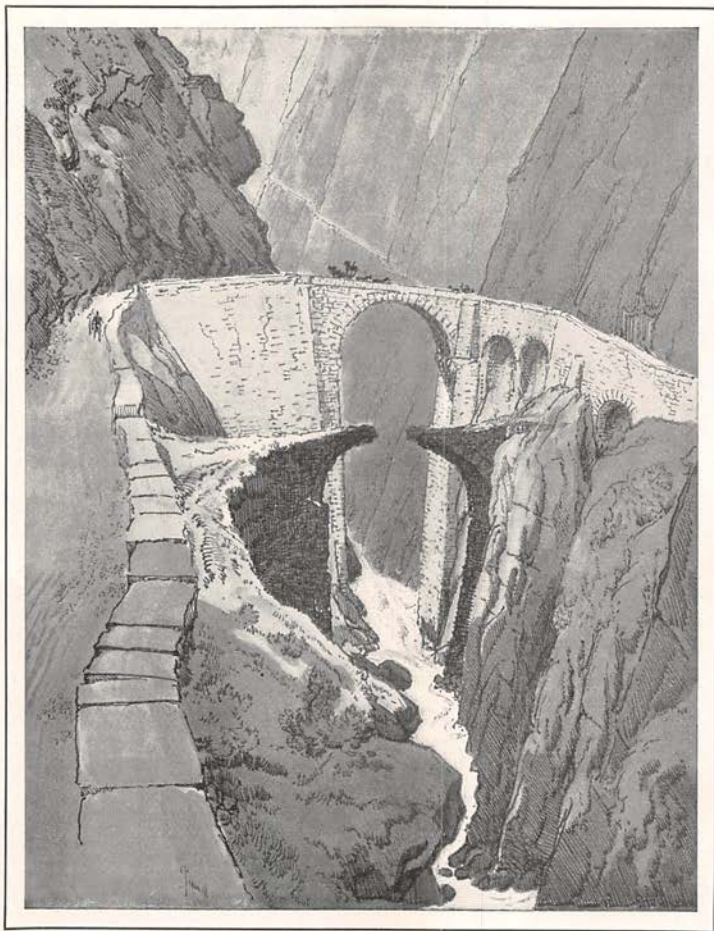
With both brakes on, and my feet on the pedals, I slipped and jolted around the turns, all the time ringing my bell; for the tourist in Switzerland never sees farther than his own nose, always walks in the middle of the road, and seems to be stone-deaf. But beyond the village of San Bernardino we met no tourists, which was a good thing, for the way had its dangers without them. The view from above the second series of zigzags was awful. The road seemed to tilt downward at the same angle as the mountain, and to uncoil itself, like some



ZIGZAGS, GALLERIES, TUNNELS, SHORT CUTS, AND STAIRS ON THE SPLÜGEN.

monstrous serpent, over the bare, grassy slopes. It looked as if only a Blondin could walk where I must steer my bicycle. And always in front was J., apparently doomed by the law of gravitation to pitch headlong. It would not have been so bad had I seen no farther than the corner I was turning, for I

right into our faces. When we came to where the St. Gotthard road joins the San Bernardino, to run on with it to Bellinzona, we turned straight back northward, for the St. Gotthard was to be our next pass. But a stiffer gale blew down the Val Ticino, and the road was all stones again, and we got no



DEVIL'S BRIDGE ON THE ST. GOTTHARD. (THE OLD WAY CROSSED THE BROKEN BRIDGE.)

had full control of my machine. But I was always in a panic at the prospect of the next curve, the next winding; and every stray goat, though it was more frightened than I, added to my terror. But we got to the bottom safe and sound, and to the bottom of the next zigzags; and it was all easy after that, coasting through a wonderful valley where the castle-crowned hills, the winding stream, the waterfalls, breaking in airy clouds of spray, and the richly wooded mountains, arranged and rearranged themselves into beautiful compositions. And we coasted until, of a sudden, a gale of wind roared up the valley

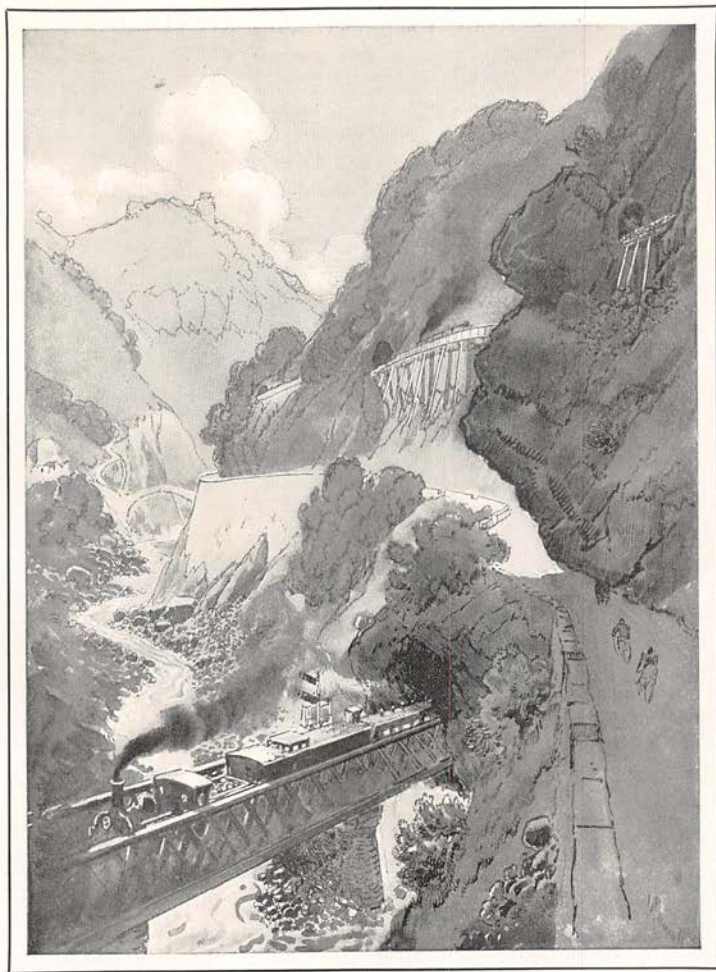
farther that evening than Bodio, about twenty kilometers on the way.

TACKLING THE ST. GOTTHARD.

IN the early morning the valley was black with smoke, and smelled strongly of coal-dust. You must travel by road to realize the wonder of the St. Gotthard railway. The road and the railway ran side by side for a while, occasionally crossing each other, when invariably we were detained by a freight-train that had started out from Bodio with us. In the end it became a regular race. The engine-

driver was always craning his neck, on the lookout for our bicycles, as we waited behind the closed gates. Higher in the valley, the train disappeared into a tunnel, and we were sure we had seen the last of it; but higher still, after we had walked a stiff up-grade, out it came from another tunnel on a level

it was on one side of the valley, now on the other; now going with us, now running away from us. We did not meet a diligence, not a wagon, not a carriage, and we saw only one tourist—a German on a bicycle, who tore past like a cyclone. There was not time to see his face; but who, save a German,



OVER THE ST. GOTTHARD BY ROAD AND RAIL. THE LOOP TUNNELS BELOW FADIO.

with the road, though how in the world it had climbed there, what it had been doing all that time, where it had been wandering in the insides of the mountain, was the marvel. Then we lost it again in a narrow gorge with space only for the stream and the high, overhanging road cut out of the rock, and we overtook it again at a higher point beyond. And so we lost and overtook or were overtaken by it throughout the morning. Or sometimes it puffed by, hundreds of feet below, sometimes hundreds of feet above; now

would carry on his own back a bag that might as easily be strapped to his wheel?

For days I had said that on the St. Gotthard I would take the railway when I was tired. But we rode almost all the way to Airolo. After Airolo, where the railway sets out on its wonderful short cut through the mountain, we walked. I have traveled into Italy by the St. Gotthard line several times, but never have I had the proper respect for it until that afternoon when we saw a train swallowed up in the great tunnel, and then

tramped for hours and hours to reach the top of the pass it was burrowing through away beneath us. We mounted and mounted and mounted, up long zigzags, through woods, past two forts; we mounted a high, barren valley above the zigzags; we mounted an endless road that crept along the mountain-side, shadeless, and blazing hot; and wherever there was a spring, we sat down and drank.

wind struck like a blow; and J. told me he was never so near collapsing. Altogether, the St. Gotthard realized my idea of what a pass should be more than any I had crossed, or was to cross later. It was not the highest on our route: 6942 is its guide-book height, and to this the Furka adds 1051 feet. But on none other had I the same impression of having climbed to the top of everywhere.



THE FIRST VIEW OF THE RHONE GLACIER FROM THE FURKA, WITH THE SOURCE OF THE RHONE AND THE GRIMSEL PASS IN THE DISTANCE.

(If the dangers of glacier-water are half what they are said to be, we should never have survived.) By a lonely refuge, which we foolishly hoped meant the top, there was a sharp turn, and we were under a great peak; and now there came both snow and ice, and it grew extremely cold, and we shivered before the perspiration was dry on our faces. On the opposite steep, short zigzags went up like stairs among the boulders. I could have dropped at the sight. But when a cart passed, and the driver offered the bicycles a place by the side of two Germans bowed under their knapsacks, but clutching their alpenstocks, I refused. I was doing this thing myself; I had not come to have it done for me. When one series of zigzags came to an end, another began, and they kept getting shorter and steeper and stonier. I felt that if once I stopped, it would be all up with me. The

However, at the top of this pass there was a hotel. A flock of Italian women, led by one man, came in with us, and called loudly for grog and post-cards. Everybody called for post-cards. After Rousseau set the fashion, people wept over the sublimities of nature, which they could not see for their tears; now they turn their backs upon the spectacle, and let their feelings loose upon illustrated post-cards. When we went out, a German cyclist in yachting-cap was at the door, tying a huge plank of wood, shaped like a paddle, to his back wheel. He explained the "system," and we showed him our brakes. "Excellent," said he, "though, in time, sure to destroy the tires." We said we would rather, any day, risk our tires than our lives. This struck him as a new and original argument worth considering. But he had worked out a theory,—he was a German,—and so he took stronger

string, and tied his paddle on tighter. He was going the other way, and we missed the catastrophe.

There is an easy side for the cyclist down every one of the great passes, and the easy side down the St. Gotthard is the northern. It was coasting all the way, round the lakes at the top, for kilometers along the road skirting the mountain, even down the zigzags into Hospenthal, and, after that, easy riding across the valley to Andermatt. Coasting and easy riding, that is, when there were no stones on the road. When there were, I liked to have my feet on the pedals; I did not care to chance a sudden jerk into a gutter only a few thousand feet deep. It was coasting again after Andermatt and the opening of the gorge, where, according to your fancy, you can look at the Devil's Bridge or buy a St. Bernard puppy at the near shop.

UP AND DOWN THE FURKA.

THE Furka was our highest pass. To prepare for it, we ate a second breakfast at Realp, at the other end of the valley, where the road begins its long windings up the mountain. There we met an Italian who had just come down on his bicycle, and could tell us all about it; and we sat talking until valley and slopes glowed red-hot in ten-o'clock sunshine, and most of the tourists were already kilometers beyond and above. While we were still on the first zigzags, we could see their carriages on the higher windings, and then, finally, on the sky-line, on a narrow ridge at the very top of the mountain, where it looked as if, at the first puff of wind, they must go plunging over into space. It was one steady grind through dust and ruts, with as little variety in the mountain-side as in the road that scaled it. We had long since left the trees for this unvarying waste of rocks and stones and boulders, as solitary and savage as the "inaccessible haunt" Byron made the fashion for his morbid heroes, when there appeared in the road before us a smiling youth in a straw hat, over his shoulders a short alpenstock, from which dangled a ladylike little bag, an umbrella, and a big paper valise of a pattern invented by the German. "Say," he remarked, in the great universal language of the Alps, "have you seen my sister?" It was sublime and, we felt, with a thrill of patriotism, American. There is no morbid nonsense about your modern hero. He is not to be discountenanced by any mere mountain. It happened that, two or three zigzags below, we had seen a young lady

sprawling full length by the roadside. The description answered; he recognized her.

Two staring white placards among the boulders advertised a couple of rival hotels somewhere higher in the waste. The Swiss could give the Americans a tip in the art of advertisement. We were far beyond the top-most zigzags—which were not near the real summit—when we reached the first hotel. But we did not like it; we felt sure we could get nothing there but view; and we tramped on, at the dizziest distance above a stony valley, to the second. If we had not liked that, we must have stopped anyway; we could not have gone a step farther. Outside was a confusion of carriages and hostlers and dogs; inside, a confusion of tongues.

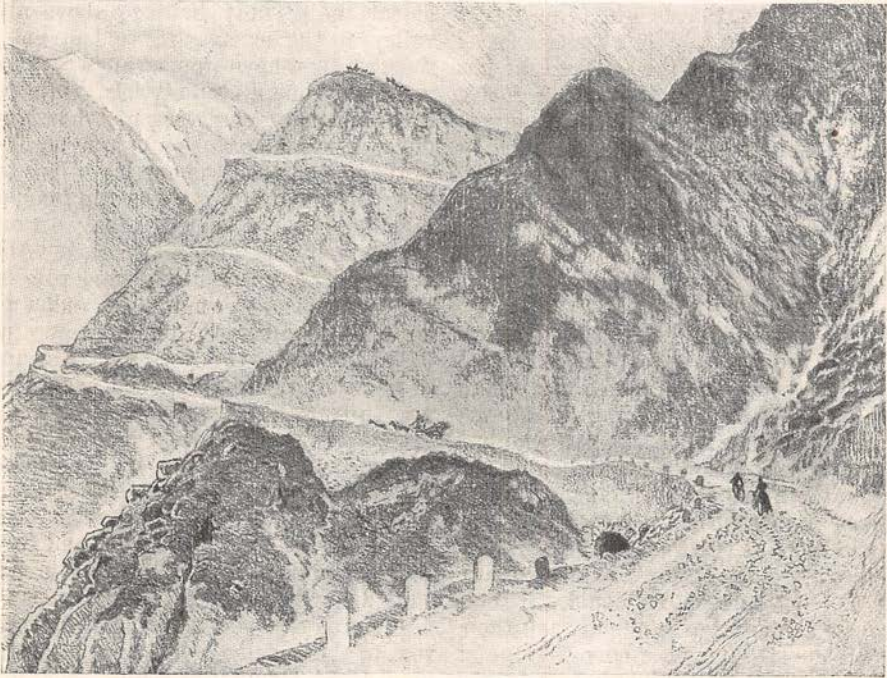
We waited until the carriages had trailed their dust far up and down the long, slanting line of the road, and then we went on, always walking, always pushing. Another steady grind through dust and ruts, above the grimmest of grim valleys, and we were on a bleak platform among snowy peaks, 7993 feet above the sea. The road, instead of ascending higher, turned a corner, and now in front of us were the bold, beautiful ranges of the Bernese Oberland, and the streams went running and leaping toward the Rhone valley, and we coasted carefully to where the Rhone Glacier swept, a frozen hurricane, over the mountains, and the road took precipitate flight down the breakneck slope below us, zigzagging as it went. The first zigzag was so steep that it brought my feet to the pedals; and the people made the long descent doubly perilous. Nor, in such an unspeakable condition was the road, did I dare to coast on the fairly straight stretch beyond—nor, for that matter, to stay on my machine when a carriage passed. Some idea of its badness may be had from the fact that the Swiss had actually set two men to mend it with a broom and a hoe. I thought the descent more perilous than ever when, from the Rhone Glacier Hotel, I watched other cyclists tackle it—six or seven in all, and only one coasting with ease, and he had a pneumatic brake like ours. The others controlled their machines by the most laborious contrivances, the simplest being to back-pedal with the right foot, while the left was lifted up and pressed firmly on the front tire; and I suppose they were all rejoicing over the pound or so saved in weight by not carrying brakes. It added to our comfort to sit there, aware of a good day's work done and a room secured in the attic, and to see them, one after the other, turned away from a hotel

full to overflowing, some to tear down to Brieg, others to press on tediously up the Grimsel.

A COAST OF TWENTY-FIVE MILES
DOWN THE GRIMSEL.

It did not seem so tedious, though, when we made our ascent in the morning. The pass is higher than the Splügen and the St. Gotthard—7103 feet; but at the Rhone Glacier Hotel, our starting-place, most of the climb-

rapidly accomplished that I remember it only as one long flight among mountains that changed with lightning speed. I was obliged to slow up only two or three times: once, when we passed a herd of cattle, with a black bull, browsing right by the roadside (the "sweet bells of the sauntering herd" may be music to the poet, but they are not to the cyclist); and again, when we overtook the tourists, stalking along in the middle of



ON THE FURKA PASS—CARRIAGES GOING UP.

ing had been done. We were about an hour and a half pushing up the zigzags to the top. There was barely time to be tired; and, while I could expend my "best bad language" on the road, it did provide entertainment in the variety of its views back upon the glacier. But of the descent on the other side, what can I say, except that it was a coast of some forty kilometers—twenty-five miles! Think of it! And, on the whole, it was an easy coast. A post-carriage did its best to beat me down the first zigzags, under the sheer walls of rock where Tyndall almost lost his life. But I let my bicycle go faster than ever before—down to the dark lakes, and the hospice in the high, naked valley, down through the gorge beyond, the Bernese Alps towering over us, first in front, and soon behind, the road winding and unwinding, now on the bare cliffs, now on the tiny, narrow strips of pasture-land. The whole descent was so

the road, their conduct far less gentlemanly than the bull's—for he, at least, did keep out of our way; and, worst of all, when we met the diligence and the post-wagons, and the drivers would not give us any space on either side of the road, and then threatened us with a whip because we tried to walk by. Except for these halts, we coasted on from the narrow defile down, and down, and down, and down, into wider valleys, and on and on, until it was a positive relief to take our feet from the rests and resume pedaling, and then walk up the big hill just before Meiringen.

BAD WEATHER, AND A WELCOME
ON THE BRÜNIG.

WE were in the town by half-past ten. We let a shower pass; we ate our breakfast. It was still early; we were still fresh. We made up our minds to do two passes that day; and

we rushed down the valley to the foot of the Brünig, a baby among passes, only 3396 feet high, with a road, we had been told, like a cinder track. We had lost the railway in the woods to our right, Lake Brienz was already far below on our left, and we were too high on the pass to turn back, when the heavens opened, and down came the deluge. Our mackintoshes against it were no better than paper. We stood under a tree; we might as well have stood under a waterfall. We walked, for the cinder track was a running stream. In ten minutes we were wet to the skin; in another five J. was deathly sick. We waded through water; we stuck in the mud; we could not see anything; we did not know how far we had got, or how long we had been getting there, but it made no difference. We stopped at the first inn we came to, without asking any questions; nor were we tempted to go farther by a glimpse of a huge hotel emerging from the near clouds.

By good luck, we had stumbled into the decentest inn, I do believe, in all Switzerland. The landlady grugged nothing that she did for us, and we made her do pretty nearly everything. She lavished her attentions out of pure goodness of heart, never doled them out with the average waiter's or chambermaid's greed for probable tips. She staggered down to the kitchen with our wardrobe—a draggled, dirty, muddy heap; but her trouble and the fire found no place in our bill the next day. She brought us clothes—the skirt of her best gown and a shawl for me, her husband's black trousers and socks for J. She offered us pie. She talked to us in broken American, and this was the explanation: she had once lived in Wisconsin! It was not much after one o'clock, but the landlady's clothes were a shocking misfit, and we were chilled to the bones; so we went to bed, and spent the afternoon there, staring upon the deluge, while some one down-stairs ground out funeral polkas and waltzes from a hand-organ. To such degrading depths of inactivity had the baby pass and the "road like a cinder track" reduced us!

TWO PASSES IN ONE MORNING.

In the morning there were clouds everywhere, and a thick, wet mist; but we were off at seven, and, after a walk of three minutes, on our machines, so near had we been, without knowing it, to the top of the pass. In fact we had climbed two passes in one day. Instead of the usual hospice, a railway-station marked the summit; but this does not detract

from our performance. I doubt if any woman, or many men, have climbed the Grimsel and the Brünig in a morning. People may object that we rode too fast. But we had not come out to play the enthusiast, and record our emotions on post-cards; we had come to ride over the Alps on a bicycle; and we had ridden so well that now we were on the last pass of all. We coasted down a road too good to be spoiled even by eighteen hours' rain. But dismal! Nothing but mist, and dripping wet woods, and damp tourists sitting on damp benches, waiting patiently for the view. Signs pointed to where all sorts of mountains ought to be seen; sign-posts directed to finer sites of observation. But there was no view, for all the preparations; none from the Brünig, none from Lungern, none from the Sarnen See. For us there was a delightful coast, but nothing to look at save clouds and gradually dissolving mist. We rode through Sarnen, through Alpnach, by the station of the railroad up Mont Pilatus. Mont Pilatus itself had retired out of sight. The railroad might have led into heaven, for the train started straight up into the clouds. It was as if the Swiss, who put a turnstile at the mouth of their gorges and label their glaciers, had hung a curtain in front of the spectacle of Lucerne. We struggled through mud on the road that runs low on the shores of the lake, under high walls of rock. We rattled over the *parvé* into the town. Pilatus sullenly kept out of sight; the Jungfrau was off duty for the day; there was no view. We ate our lunch in a restaurant on the riverbanks; we "did" the sights of the town. Still there was no Pilatus, no Jungfrau, no view. We had crossed our last pass; we had looked our last upon the Alps; they had gone completely. We never saw them again.

I am told I have made a record. I think I have—and one, too, to be proud of. We went over ten passes, six in less than a week. We worked at times as hard as dock-laborers. Dock-laborers! The dock-laborer works eight hours a day, and loafes the others. We often worked sixteen. We were scorched by the sun, stifled by the dust, drenched by the rain. Long kilometers of climbing were the price paid for every coast. What was the use of it, you ask? None. In this you have the great beauty of the ride. There are moments and moods when you must toil for your holiday as for your daily bread. One finds happiness in goading a donkey up hill and down; another in pushing a bicycle over the Alps. Besides, we wished to see if we could push ours over. We could, and we did.