THE LAKE, THE RIGI, AND MOUNT PILATUS

To call the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons the Lake of Lucerne is as correct locally as to call Lac Leman the Lake of Geneva; and it meets with as much sympathy among the inhabitants. The Lake of Lucerne is really but a modest portion of the whole, and the whole is so delightfully irregular in form as almost to be three lakes, if not four. The form of the Lake is sometimes likened to that of a cross, but this, as any map will show, is a reckless definition, and has far less warrant than the profile of Pilate's face which some find in the outline of Mount Pilatus, or the lion *couchant* which some see in the combined outline of the two Mythen when viewed from Brunnen. As a matter of fact, the Lake's form is too eccentric to resemble anything but what it is —a series of bays. And, speaking strictly, the Lake of Lucerne is just one of these bays.

Where fascination and charm are so great and abundant, where places of historical and natural interest are so many and famous, it is not easy to decide what to see first; and yet, I suppose, comparatively

few visitors hesitate to make a bee-line for the Rigi. By right of conquest the Rigi holds a prime place among the attractions of the district. Thanks to sunrise, thanks to Mark Twain, to Tartarin, and a host of others, thanks also to the fact of the railway to its summit being the first of its kind in the field, the Rigi's fame is as great as, if not greater than, that of Tell's Chapel on the Bay of Uri. Certainly it is greater than that of Pilatus—though whether it is deservedly so is another matter. So famous is it, that writers, carried far upon the wave-crest of enthusiasm, have not shrunk from acclaiming it "Queen of the Mountains"—a valuation which gives one furiously to think how uncommonly crowded with royalties is this stanch republic. But whatever may be thought of the Rigi as a monarch among mountains, it is, in any case, a Mecca among mountains. Its summit, the Kulm, is deservedly popular, not only for the intrinsic beauty of the vast panorama of Alp, valley, lake, and plain, but also because it is an eminently suitable spot from which to comprehend something of the rugged, tumbled country whose stern exigencies upon life have bred that simple, direct, and nobly independent spirit which broke the might of Austria and of Burgundy and wrung—indeed, still wrings—respect from all enemies of Freedom.

However, with all due respect for Her Majesty,

I see no reason why her illustrious presence, though it dominate the Bay of Küssnacht, should so overwhelm the rights and reputation of that Bay. In course of sequence, and moving, as is seemly, with the orbit of the sun, the Bay of Küssnacht should come first upon the programme. But there stands the Rigi, clothed in such bright repute that the Bay which laves its northern base is, as far as tourists are concerned, comparatively neglected. Little else do many see of its beauty-spots than the tiny gleaming-white shrine to St. Nicholas, the fishermen's patron saint, set picturesquely upon one of the isolated rocks of Meggen; and this only as the steamer passes on its way across to the royal presence at Vitznau. And yet this Bay possesses a very charming individuality. There is little that is wild and rugged about it, if the bold escarpments of the Rigi be excepted. Handsome châteaux—particularly Neu-Habsburg, standing by the ruins of an ancient seat of the Dukes of Hapsburg—and country houses, orchards, and rich farm-pastures claim its shores. The verdure of field and tree touches the water's edge and merges in a velvet-rich reflection of itself. Happy prosperity is the keynote of this Bay: "Earth is here so kind, that just tickle her with a hoe and she laughs with a harvest" —welcome complement to the wild, weird shores of Uri. Moreover, at the end of the Bay is Küssnacht,

RUINS OF GESSLER'S STRONGHOLD AT KÜSSNACHT

as quaint and picturesque a town as there is in the Lake's whole district (despite the bold intrusion of "Auto Benzin" and "Afternoontea" by the side of ancient heraldic decorations). Here Goethe stopped in 1797, at the Gasthaus zum Engel, containing the ancient Rathsaal, dating from 1424; here, too, a little way back from the town, is the Hollow Way, which figures so prominently in Schiller's *William Tell*; and here, crowning a steep wooded knoll near by, are the last remnants of Gessler's sinister stronghold in whose dungeon Tell was to have been incarcerated—

"There, where no beam of sun or moon finds entrance".

The ruins of this castle, composed largely of the Rigi's pudding-stone, are not in themselves impressive to-day, except in their associations with the tragic past —associations strikingly symbolized by the bold erect clumps of Atropa, the venomous Belladonna, so suggestively established amid the crumbling debris. But the site is a fascinating and beautiful one with the shady stream, the old water-mill and farmsteads below, and glimpses of the Lake between the trees. It is especially lovely in autumn when the beeches are a-fire, and one wonders then if Longfellow, who knew Lucerne and neighbourhood, was here or hereabouts inspired to write—

"Magnificent Autumn! He comes not like a pilgrim, clad in

russet weeds. He comes not like a hermit, clad in gray. But he comes like a warrior, with the stain of blood upon his brazen mail."

For the Bay of Küssnacht is a revelation of what the dying year can achieve in colour-splendour.

The peculiar geography of the Lake has happily done much to guard natural beauties and rural simplicities against certain of man's customary attacks. Only at four points upon its shores has the Federal Railway found it convenient to break the peace. Communication is thus in large part by the more fitting and picturesque service of steamboats. Unless, therefore, we go round, via Küssnacht, to Arth-Goldau on the eastern side of the Rigi and thence take the mountain-line to the summit, it is by steamboat that we must reach Weggis or Vitznau, from whence to make the ascent of the Monarch. Weggis, with its big old chocolate-coloured chalets seated upon full-green slopes, and its luxuriance of fig trees sweeping the water-line, was, before the mountain-railway at Vitznau came into existence in 1871, the starting-point for reaching the Rigi's heights; even to-day the many who prefer pedestrianism use this route, though Vitznau has become the crowded centre. In whatever else she may have suffered from this change, Weggis has lost nothing in beauty and repose by Vitznau being the dumping-ground for some 120,000

tourists annually. But let it not be thought that Vitznau has no charming moments, particularly in the spring and autumn, when the ruddy conglomerate crags of the Rigi soar above woods and orchards radiant with colour, and thin mists lend increasing fascination to the "Pearl of the Lake"—the abrupt, cliff-like mass of the Bürgenstock rising from the opposite shore, at all times an arresting feature of the lake-side scenery despite its comparatively modest proportions.

As for the Rigi and the ascent thereof, what more can be said than countless pens have told already? Enthusiasm—easily and plentifully acquired in such splendid surroundings—has dubbed it "without a rival on the face of the earth" Can I say more? Less, perhaps; but surely never more! However, an abundant rapture is excusable. Language is poor to explain the lavish beauty that Nature has assembled in the panorama which unfolds itself as the train moves upwards; superlative exclamation is wellnigh bound to creep into the expression of even the coldest of temperaments. When, beyond a foreground in which trees and chalets are so out of the perpendicular as to appear as though toppling over into the abyss below, the giant Alps of the Bernese Oberland slowly rise above the peaks of Unterwalden, and the distant Jura mountains come into view upon the horizon far be-

yond Lucerne, lying map-like by the softly iridescent Lake, whose complex contours gradually reveal themselves from Alpnachstad to Küssnacht and from Buochs to Kehrsiten—when this wide-flung landscape, bathed in slight blue-purple haze, is steadily disclosed before the eager gaze of the tourist, whose imagination has been already whipped into liveliness by all that he has read and heard, small wonder if language is driven to hyperbole. And as the train creeps up and up, over steep slopes covered with bracken-fern and stately yellow Gentian; up and up, over rocky chasm and flower-filled pasture, till at last, at some 6000 feet, the summit-station of the Kulm is reached and the tourist steps out, and finds himself dominating an Alpine landscape over which his eye can roam for miles in all directions, then certainly may he be excused if his emotion runs riot with his gift of weighty utterance.

"There are some descriptions", wrote Alexandre Dumas, the elder, about this very prospect, "which the pen cannot give, some pictures which the brush cannot render; one has to appeal to those who have seen them and content oneself with saying that there is no more magnificent spectacle in the world than this panorama of which one is the centre, and which embraces 3 mountain chains, 22 lakes, 17 towns, 40 villages, and 70 glaciers spread over a circumference of 250 miles. ' It is not merely a magnificent view, a splendid panorama, it is a phantasmagoria."

Here, at all events, distance lends enchantment to the view. Details are blurred for the time being, for

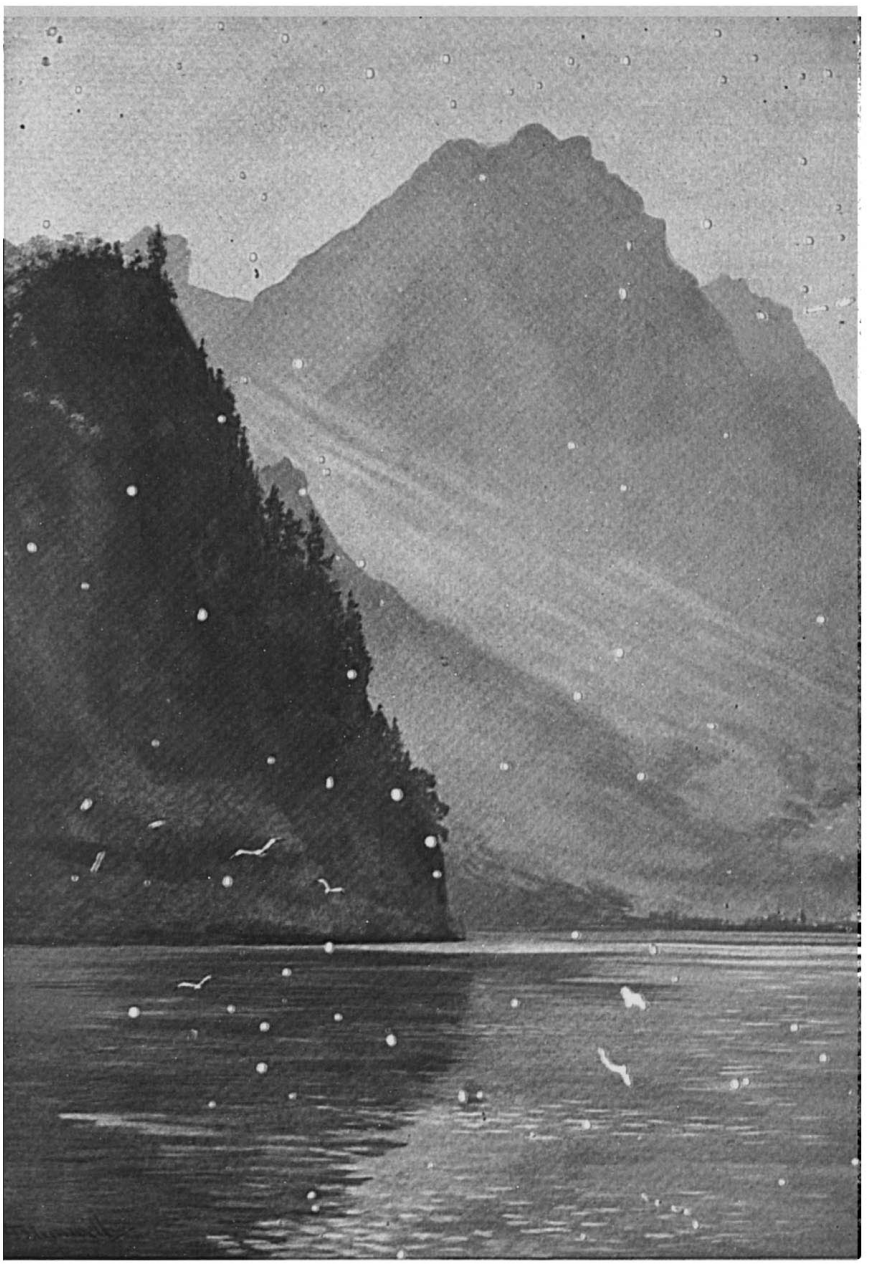
the brain at first has no use for them. Large, unified impressions monopolize the senses; inquisitiveness and criticism are swamped by acute though vague emotion, and we are content to gaze at the vast expanse of lovely shaded colour rather than at any formal object. But after a while, when the senses have drunk deeply of these first impressions, enquiry, that dream-destroying faculty, asserts itself; out come sundry maps and guidebooks, topography is to the front, history is probed, and away to Memory's secret treasury flies our unambitious entrancement, only to invade us afresh in later quiet moments at home. George Borrow, in the very characteristic Introduction to his *Wild Wales*, considers that "scenery soon palls unless it is associated with remarkable events, and the names of remarkable men". Possibly this opinion is upon all-fours with that other expressed by Mason, one of Horace Walpole's friends:—

> "For what is Nature? Ring her changes round.
> Her three flat notes are water, plants, and ground.
> Prolong the strain and, spite of all your chatter,
> The tiresome theme is still ground, plants, and water."

Be this as it may—and both opinions are at least debatable—the scenery here, around the Rigi, is so bound up with remarkable events and remarkable men that, willy-nilly, some sort of acquaintance has to be made with them.

Among the twenty-two lakes which go to the making of this wondrous panorama are at least two that we shall hear of when we come into closer contact with William Tell and his momentous age. Away to the left of the Rossberg, and beyond and above the Lake of Zug, is the little Aegeri-See, upon whose shores the epoch-marking battle of Morgarten was fought in 1315, some seven years after the secret banding together of the men of Schwyz, Uri, and Unterwalden to throw off the tyrannic yoke of Austria. The trouble, which had been brewing through many years of oppression, came to a head when the men of Schwyz attacked and pillaged the Abbey of Einsiedeln (to the east of the Lake of Aegeri, and still a famous place of pilgrimage), taking the monks prisoners, because the Abbot, under a deed of gift from the Austrian Emperor, claimed the mountain pastures of Schwyz for his cattle. Austria determined to crush this revolt, and on November 15, 1315, the Duke Leopold I raised an army 20,000 strong and marched upon Schwyz.

"The Austrians", says Alexandre Daguet, in his little primer used in Swiss schools, "were so sure of victory that they had with them carts full of rope with which to bind their prisoners. A noble of the neighbourhood, Henri de Hünenberg, warned the Confederates of the danger which menaced them, and 1300 armed peasants at once posted themselves upon the heights dominating the Lake of Aegeri. The Austrian army climbed laboriously the mountain path, when suddenly blocks of rock were hurled upon



MOUNT PILATUS FROM STANSSTAD

them from the heights, causing frightful disorder in their ranks. Others of the Confederates then attacked the Austrians with clubs and halebards, slaughtering such as were not drowned in the lake. A crowd of nobles bit the dust, and the Duke himself only narrowly escaped death, arriving *pâle et effaré* the same evening at Winterthour."

This battle was the young Confederation's baptism of blood, and on the following 19th of December the secret pact made on the Rütli in 1307 was publicly confirmed at Brunnen.

The Lake of Sempach, too, upon whose shores, in 1386, another heroic victory was won from Austria, can be seen in the direction of Basle.

"The Swiss, to the number of 1400, knelt in prayer, then flung themselves upon the enemy. But in vain did they strive against the wall of pikes. Sixty of their number already lay bathed in their own blood, and in another moment the little army would have been enveloped by the enemy. Suddenly a man of Unterwalden, Arnold von Winkelried, cried aloud to them: 'Confederates, I will open a way for you; take care of my wife and children'. Then, throwing himself upon the enemy's pikes, he gathered in his arms as many of these as possible, and fell, opening a breach in the Austrian ranks, through which the Confederates rushed. The Austrians resisted furiously. The Duke Leopold himself fought with great bravery, but he was killed by a man of Schwyz."

At this battle the town of Lucerne lost its famous burgomaster, Petermann von Gundoldingen, whose frescoed house still stands in the Seidenhof Strasse. The coat of mail which Duke Leopold wore at Sempach is kept in the Museum at the old Rathaus at

Lucerne, together with several banners taken from the Austrians.

To the south of the Lake of Zug, and lying beneath the precipitous masses of the two Mythen, is the little Lowerz-See with the tiny Isle of Schwanau, seeming like a mere boat upon its surface. This lake, also, has its part in history. King Ludwig of Bavaria, Wagner's far-sighted if eccentric patron, sojourned for a time upon the Isle of Schwanau; so also did Goethe. But history goes back further than this: back again to the tyrannical Austrian governors, one of whom had his castle on the island. And history (or is it legend? —hereabouts the line is often not well marked between the two) tells of how this Governor "was smitten with the charms of three beautiful but virtuous sisters, living in the neighbourhood of Arth", and of how these three sisters, to escape his importunities, "fled to the pathless wilds of the Rigi". Here, near a spring of water, they built themselves "a little hut of bark" and settled down to live, until one summer night some herdsmen noticed "three bright lights hovering over the wooded rocks", and, following these lights, they reached the little hut where they discovered the three good sisters wrapped in their last long sleep. The spot, near the Rigi-Kaltbad Hotel, is still famous as the *Schwesternborn*, and its waters are noted for their healing properties.

Between the Lakes of Zug and Lowerz rises the Rossberg, from whose side, on September 2, 1806, descended the terrible fall of rock which destroyed the town of Goldau. Ruskin speaks of it in *Modern Painters*, and Lord Avebury, in *The Scenery of Switzerland*, gives the following brief account:—

"The railway from Lucerne to Brunnen passes the scene of the remarkable rockfall of Goldau. The line runs between immense masses of puddingstone, and the scar on the Rossberg from which they fell is well seen on the left. The mountain consists of hard beds of sandstone and conglomerate, sloping towards the valley, and resting on soft argillaceous layers. During the wet season of 1806 these became soaked with water, and being thus loosened, thousands of tons of the solid upper layers suddenly slipped down and swept across the valley, covering a square mile of fertile ground to a depth, it is estimated, in some places of 200 feet. The residents in the neighbourhood heard loud cracking and grating sounds, and suddenly, about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the valley seemed shrouded in a cloud of dust, and when this cleared away the whole aspect of the place was changed. The valley was blocked up by immense masses of rocks and rubbish, Goldau and three other villages were buried beneath the debris, and part of the Lake of Lowerz was filled up. More than 450 people were killed."

In September, 1881, a similar catastrophe overtook the village of Elm, in Canton Glarus (somewhat to the right of the Glärnisch, and almost in a direct line with Brunnen, looking from the Rigi), when the Plattenbergkopf fell: 10,000,000 cubic metres of rock. Sir Martin Conway, in *The Alps from End to End*, has a long and vivid description of this mountain-fall and of all the horrors which it entailed.

Enough! It would take volumes to hold all of moment that could be told in connection with this panorama. But what of the Rigi itself? Well, it serves what has become peculiarly its purpose—a nesting-place for innumerable hotels and their parasitic incongruities, and a platform from which thousands upon thousands witness the sunrise. Except, then, in its remoter parts and around about its base it is so trampled on by hosts of feet that the early spring crocus and the late autumn gentians are almost alone among the lovely flowers to have a peaceful, profitable time. Ask the Swiss Heimatschutz — the Society for the Protection of Natural Beauty—what it thinks of the present state of the Rigi, the Stanserhorn, and Mount Pilatus; it will give an answer couched in no mixed terms. One of the most patent and painful paradoxes of our age is, that our appreciation destroys so much of that which we appreciate. Inconsequence links its arm in that of the holiday-maker. Hence the call for the Eastern Labyrinth in the Glacier Garden at Lucerne, and the extraordinary number of bead-necklace and bracelet shops crowded together in that quarter of the town. True, on the Rigi "the questionable melody of the Alpine horn" echoes through the early morning darkness, and chamois finds a place upon the hotel menu — goat being inadmissible at such an altitude; but are there

THE BERNESE ALPS FROM MOUNT PILATUS

not also the bazaars full of Brummagem trinkets and what not?—strange, mysterious effect of Alpine air upon the human system!

From the Rigi it is well to turn to Mount Pilatus. The experience will be in but small measure a repetition; for Pilatus has marked individuality. Although Alpnachstad, the starting-point of the Pilatus Railway, is one of the few places on the Lake which may be reached by rail from Lucerne, not many people, I imagine, avail themselves of this means of transit. To take the train, as being quicker than the steamboat, is a false economy; in Switzerland less haste means wider experience and finer views. The tree-clothed cliff of the Bürgenstock is never seen to greater advantage than when the boat heads for Kehrsiten, after leaving Kastanienbaum (where, by the way, it is said that the first horse-chestnut trees on the Lake were planted); nor is Pilatus ever more picturesque than when seen from the quay-side at Stansstad. But more than this—for those who invariably see dignity and beauty in man's labours, and who think that "ugliness means failure of some kind", there is, from Kehrsiten, an admirable view of the open ironwork shaft of the electric lift which decorates the lovely Hammetschwand; and after passing the swing bridge which gives entrance to the Alpnacher-See, there are the Cement Works of Rotzloch, where

the gorge, the trees, the whole hillside are as though dressed for some *bal poudré*—even the piermaster.

It was in late October when I was last upon Pilatus. Fog ruled the roast about Lucerne; a fog so dense, though white, that the steamboats moved with the utmost caution, feeling their way as much by incessant interchange of bell-signals with the shore as by the compass. That the beech woods were ablaze with autumn's waning energy was known, but little besides grey, ghostlike objects could be seen as the train started with a jerk upon its strenuous journey. Nor was there anything but fog and phantoms for some twenty minutes or more. Then slowly the fog lightened, the phantoms took on the form of trees, grew warmer in tint, still warmer and still clearer, until the golden, red-brown woods, purpled in part by distance, became revealed, all wreathed about with trails of veil-like mist. Before the lower, rock-strewn pastures of the Matt-Alp were reached, every vestige of the fog was left lying compact below, and the train was labouring upwards towards a radiant, cloudless sky. The Alps, of course, are rich in such experience as this, but I can remember nothing that ever more nearly realized my conception of fairyland. Indeed, if it were not like saying that a lovely hot-house orchid is so natural as to seem to be made of wax, I would declare that the piercing of the fog-

zone that day on the autumn-tinted sides of Mt. Pilatus resembled nothing so much as the grand transformation scene of our Christmas-time theatres, when gauze veil after gauze veil is slowly rolled away, and from grey, then tinted mystery emerges brilliant, spotless colour.

What a wonderful journey this railway provides! If any proof were needed of the high eminence of Swiss engineers, and of the indomitable spirit and resource which the Alps breed in their children, here assuredly it is. Beasts, plants, birds, and insects are not alone to feel the influence of Alpine circumstance upon character; hare and saxifrage, ptarmigan and fritillary are not the only pupils trained in Nature's Alpine school. Man, in common with the chamois and the edelweiss, the eagle and the erebia, owes priceless capacity to the life imposed by high-flung precipice, and pasture. Nursed in all the rigour and beneficence accompanying contact with high altitudes, he develops much of that amazing efficiency, that impelling adaptiveness which is so admired in "Alpines". The will to master the worst and to enjoy the best is never more alert than in the dweller among mountains. And this fact is borne in upon the imagination as the train climbs panting up the face of the Eselwand, in every way the culminating labour of its journey. Here the track has been carved upon a

sheer precipice, and it makes one dizzy to think of the workmen's initial efforts to gain a foothold. Some idea of the resource and nerve that must have been required can be gathered by standing upon the Kulm Station platform and turning to gaze down the way the train came up; or, better still, on the rocks beyond the hotel and facing the Esel's fearsome cliff to which the line so desperately clings; for from this vantage-ground the Titlis and the Alps of Uri, Unterwalden, and the Grisons rise beyond and between the Esel and the Matthorn, giving terrible depth to the gaunt masses of these latter, and thus suggesting the magnitude of the task performed by the railway builders.

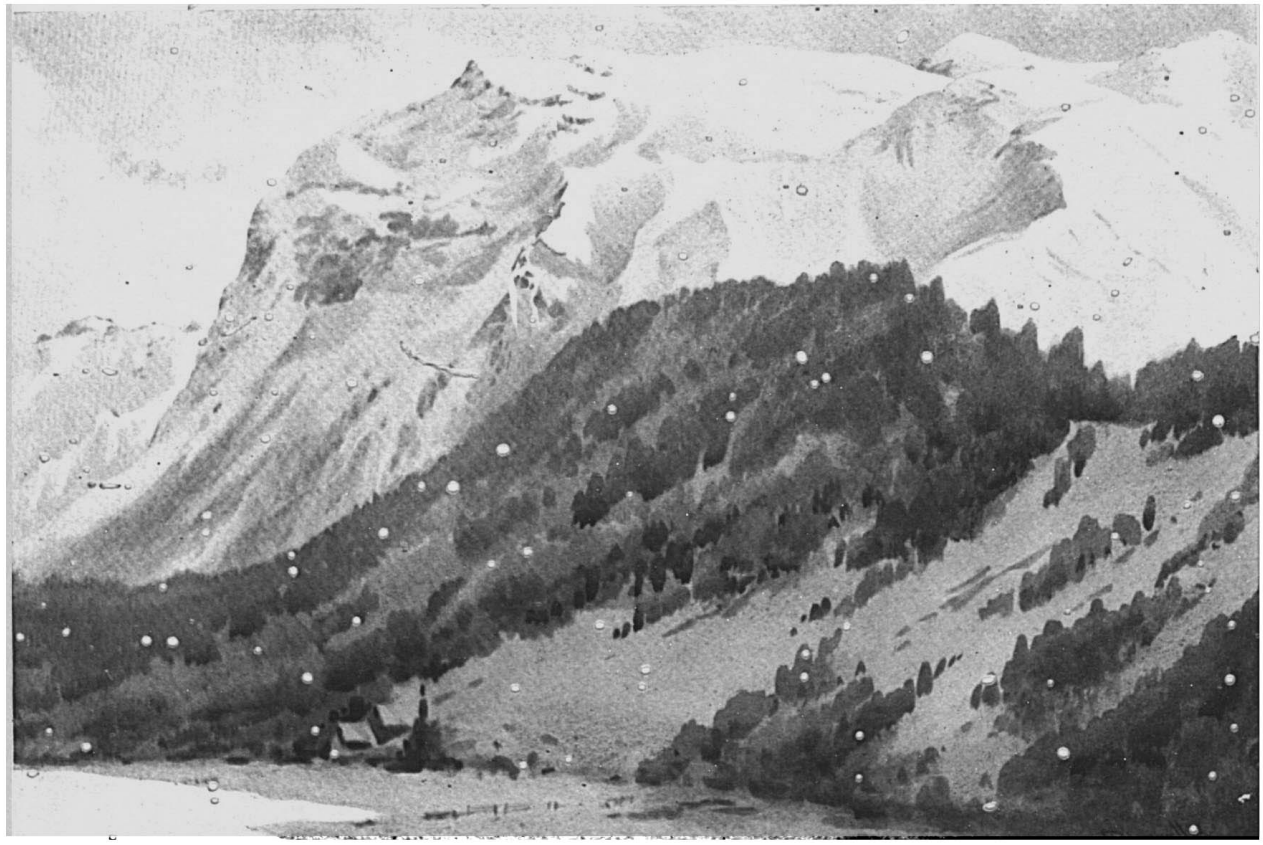
A large part of the superiority of Pilatus over the Rigi lies in its magnificent foreground: invaluable adjunct to the panorama. A vast, unbroken horizon is well for a time, but it is all of a piece, and its very immensity becomes wearisome. Humanity is more at home with partially hidden views. To have everything simultaneously discovered is, for many subtle but important reasons, to impose a limit upon interest. A certain amount of interruption gives durability to pleasure. Delightful combinations are present, and the eye can rest reposefully upon portions which in themselves are perfect pictures. In this manner, then, Pilatus is more attractive than either the Rigi or the Stanserhorn. The panorama itself may be much the

same from all three of these eminences, but from Pilatus it is enhanced by the mighty foreground. All about the summit are wild, weird places of fascination, and this was particularly so during those late autumnal days, with the dense, billowy sea of fog below, covering the whole Lake, stretching away over the plain towards the Jura, straggling up the valleys towards Engelberg and the Brünig Pass, and leaving such prominences as the Rigi, the Bürgenstock, and the Stanserhorn like islands, floating on a scarcely moving ocean. The huge, abrupt escarpments of Pilatus looked the more impressive for the purple shadows which they threw upon this milk-white sea; and the choughs, circling and whistling about the crags, lent just that eerie note which has been so fruitful of legend in the past.

For fiery dragons once had their lairs upon these heights. Renward Cysart, town clerk of Lucerne in the sixteenth century, says so; and he tells of how they were often seen flying backwards and forwards between Pilatus and the Rigi. One day, he avers, a cooper from Lucerne, while climbing Pilatus, missed his footing, fell into a cavern, and on coming to his senses, found himself confronted with "two large, terrible, and monstrous dragons"; which, however, did him no harm, but allowed him to live with them until the return of summer, when he, clinging to the tail of one of his delightful hosts, was landed in a safe place, from

whence he reached home and recounted his adventure, which recountal was handed down through several generations until it came to Master Cysart who, therefore, vouches for its accuracy, though regretting "that the day, year, and name have, through carelessness, passed into forgetfulness" Dragons were common objects of the Alps in those and previous days. The country between Stanz and Kernwald (well seen from Pilatus) was ravaged, about the year 1240, by an enormous specimen, which was slain by one Winkelried, an ancestor of the hero of Sempach. Legend usually has relative truth at the back of it, and although we may feel inclined to dismiss dragons and their doings as unalloyed fabrications of primitive, superstitious minds, yet certain authorities hold that the dragon was a species of enormous serpent formerly inhabiting some parts of the Alps, but now extinct there.

Pilatus is said to obtain its name from what is perhaps the most important of the host of legends connected with the mountain. Although there has been an attempt to derive *Pilatus* from *pileatus*, meaning "hatted" (in reference to the "hat" or hood of cloud which so frequently sits upon the summit), the more probable derivation seems to be from the one-time belief that Pontius Pilate's remains were buried in a lake near the summit of the mountain. According to this legend, Pontius Pilate committed



THE TITLIS FROM ENGELBERG—WINTER

suicide in prison in Rome, and his body was thrown into the Tiber, when at once a terrific, devastating storm arose. The body was therefore taken out, conveyed to Vienne, in France, and thrown into the Rhone, here again causing disturbance. It was then transferred to Lausanne, but a further repetition of its untoward behaviour caused it to be banished to the little lake upon Mount Pilatus. Here it remained benign so long as the lake was in no way interfered with. If, however, anything was thrown into the water, "the lightnings flashed, the thunder rolled, and desolation broke over the land". The town council of Lucerne therefore felt called upon to forbid all persons to approach the Lake, and it is related how at least one wretched man was executed for disobedience. But

"by degrees the belief in the supernatural powers of the old Roman began to decay," says J. Hardmeyer, in his little work upon this mountain, "and at last, in 1585, a certain Johannes Muller, rector of Lucerne, brought about its complete overthrow. With numerous companions he made his way to the lake on Mount Pilatus, boldly challenged the evil spirit to show his might, threw stones into the water, and made some of his people wade about in it, and behold, neither storm nor tempest followed, not a wave rose, and the skies remained as serene as before. This was the death-blow to the legend of Pontius Pilate and his evil deeds. The council of Lucerne went still further: they had the mountain lake drained off, so that nothing remained of it but a small morass, where a little water still collects after the melting of the snows, but soon disappears."

Thus perishes Romance before the onward march of prosaic understanding!