

FELL'S RAILWAY OVER THE ALPS.

PARIS, April 24.—The railway over Mount Cenis, which is a temporary method of transit only until the tunnel is completed, is called the American railway, its inventor, Mr. Fell, who built the one up Mount Washington, being styled an American; and we were promised a ride in real American cars. The time of starting was 7 a. m. There was a great crowd of all sorts at the station, a lively fight for tickets at the box office, for the perfect French system has not reached the other side of the Alps, and then we waited half-past 7 before we were let out to the cars. The train ready to go consisted of an engine and two first-class passenger carriages. The carriages were about half the length of ours at home, with seats on each side, so that the passengers face each other in an omnibus, and with windows at the sides from which it is difficult to see out when one is squeezed in tight on the seat with his back to them. The cars also are very narrow, the track being only three feet six or seven inches gauge, so that they are not much more comfortable than an omnibus. The first class, was twenty-five, second class, twenty. From France, from Susa to St. Michel, the time occupied in the passage being from four to five hours.

The locomotives of these trains are small, compact, and powerful; their trucks, as well as those of the carriages, set well in the middle, so that they can turn very short curves. The track has three rails, one elevated in the center. Besides its ordinary driving wheels, the locomotive has two horizontal wheels which press this third rail on either side, and it is by this strong traction that the train is pulled up. The carriages have corresponding wheels for the center rail, but their only use is to keep the train on the track. Both cars and locomotive have double sets of brakes, one for the ordinary and one for the center rail, so that they can screw the cars to the track with the grip of a vice, and render it almost impossible for the carriages to run away. There is every precaution against accident; and I should only fear the snow storms of winter, and perhaps an avalanche in some places high up, which are not roofed in.

We began to climb the hill directly we left the station, exactly as a carriage drawn by horses would do. In fact, our track ran parallel to the carriage road all the way, was just as steep and made the short turns of the latter. Our train seemed to be a huge live reptile with legs and claws, that crawled up by its own power; it literally dug right up hill, and we felt ourselves mounting, and looking back, could see the steep incline. On the curves, where the wheels got a good grip of the rails, we moved with ease and more rapidly than on a straight pull, where the locomotive evidently labored more, and we rose more slowly. The steepest grade on the road is one foot in nine feet, but this is only for short distances. The rise of one in twelve is more common; and the least (of which any note is taken) is one in twenty-five. The curves are so short as to be startling. We seemed to turn in a space as small as an ordinary wagon could. The shortest curves are on a radius of only 120 feet; that is, our train would run round a circle only 240 feet in diameter. Our track was all the time in sight, behind and before, running along the steep hillsides, and constantly doubling, like a compressed letter S.

You march up with triumphant ease, rising among the grand snow peaks like a conqueror. The valleys open behind you, with their rivers and brown villages, the great panorama expanding with every revolution of the wheels. You skirt precipices and look down upon nesting villages and green fields; you push your way up among the snow regions, the stone huts of the beggar, half naked, dirty peasants, and the refuge houses of the road; are whisked round rocky headlands, through tunnels and covered ways, over deep gullies and tracks of avalanches, rising always higher and higher, as by expenditure of strength, into a purer air, among peaks of virgin snow, among the silent summits of the enduring Alps.

The day was superb, with blue sky and fine air, and it was so warm even in the snow region, that I needed no overcoat. Our view was for the most part uninterrupted and magnificent. The summit level is about 3,500 feet above the sea, and before we reached it we passed into a covered way, built of wood at the sides and arched with iron, and were immersed in this, in the ascent, descent, and on the level for four or five miles, I should think; dark, unpleasant passages, made worse by the smoke and fumes of the locomotive. These covered ways are absolutely necessary as a protection against avalanches in many places, and against the falls of snow for long distances. Through the chinks of the boards I could see the snow piled up high along the way. The summit station is in one of these long sheds, and is gloomy enough.

We made the descent more rapidly than the ascent, swinging around the short bends with considerable velocity. The brakes were jammed hard down until I could smell the odor caused by the friction. On the descent I saw the towering forts of Brumont d'Esillon, on peaks high above the abysses through which the Arc flows and roars, connected with the road by a thread of a suspension bridge over the gorge, called the Pont du Diable. The forts are being demolished now, under the agreement between France and Italy. Lower down, and about ten miles up the mountain from St. Michel, we caught sight of the rubbish at the opening of the great tunnel, which enters the mountain at Fourneau. It is to be eight and a half miles long, and it is expected to be completed in 1871. It is no doubt a great and most interesting bore, but if I desired a pleasure trip, I think I should prefer a road of Mr. Fell over the mountain to this hole through it.

I talked with a locomotive driver on our train, by the way (an Englishman, as they all are on this road), who insisted that Mr. Fell was not an American. He knew him well, lived near him in the north of England, and said he was not an engineer at all, except so far as this invention was concerned, but a dissenting clergyman. He is certainly a dissenter from the ordinary style of railways. The engineer was an excellent specimen of an

intelligent, literate English mechanic, with a drawl and nasal twang in his speech, but a Cape Cod man might envy; and he gave me a great deal of valuable information about the road, which I might here impart, if your readers cared for valuable information, which I suppose they do not. "He was taking a h'off for pleasure," he said, and going down to see the work on the big bore. "Twas a nasty bit of work this of running twice over the road daily, as he did, and only getting twelve pounds a month for the job, especially in the winter, with the snow and the beastly wind. There had been only six days in the past winter when they couldn't run on account of snow, and then the passengers had been carried over the break on sledges. He explained to me the construction of the locomotive, the application of its power, the working of the brakes, and the whole thing, so that I think I can build a road out to West Hartford, over Prospect Hill and to the tower if anybody desires, when I return. Sealed proposals, enclosing stamp and photograph, can be left on the Probate steps. I said to the engineer that I supposed it impossible for the locomotive, with three rails, to get off the track. Well, he said, his machine got off once last winter. The fact was, that the thing got the upper hand of him, and ran away with him. He spoke of it as if it were a horse. He was running with the locomotive alone, taking her down the mountain, not minding exactly, when he found he had got on so much steam that he couldn't hold her. He was going down the one in nine, round them 'ere nasty curves, when she started. He shut off, and jammed down all the brakes, reserve and all, but she only appeared to go the faster. Away she went, like the—(so he said), whisking round, and at last bounded and went slam ag in a rock. "If she'd gone over the wire on a t'other side, I wouldn't be here to tell you of it." It was nearly one o'clock when we ran into St. Michel, and, passing the hump of a custom house, took comfortable cars for Lyons.—Hartford Courant.

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