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valley, and following the tremendous hairpin bends through the famous Schöllenen gorge, which is nearly three miles long. For some time they had heard the sound of waterfalls ahead and it gradually became a roar. Then suddenly they turned a corner and there was the granite Devil's Bridge, spanning a terrific abyss where the river Reuss fell in a seething torrent over the cliffs. They crossed the bridge and the road took them through a tunnel in the rocks about seventy yards long. When they emerged it was to a different landscape, and John had a sense of relief. Instead of harsh jagged rocks and frowning cliffs they saw the peaceful Urseren valley spread out in front of them, its grassy expanse now covered in white.

The snow became thicker and the granite pylons marking the road were only just visible. The three came into Andermatt very shortly afterwards and went to an inn for lunch.

'The three pass routes — the Furka from Gletsch, the St. Gotthard from the Ticino, and the Oberalp from the Grisons — meet at Andermatt', Herr Tschudi explained. 'The St. Gotthard range is the centre of the Swiss Alps — a big group of granite rocks that are our most important fortresses.'

After lunch John and Herr Häberli sat talking in the snug *Gaststube*, the inn parlour, while Herr Tschudi went on his business. He told John that the Gotthard zone was notorious for heavy avalanches. There were often several hundred a year.

'Why are there so many here in particular?' John asked.

'They're started by a wind which we call the

Föhn. It's characteristic of Switzerland, and the result of the tremendous differences in air pressure either side of the Alps.'

The return journey was heavy going, for the snow was nearly a foot deep. Herr Tschudi walked ahead, and John followed in his footsteps. They tramped in silence through the gorge back to Göschenen. There wasn't much breath left for talking. There they boarded the Gotthard express at about five o'clock and gladly settled into the comfortable seats. They had had enough walking for the time being.

Just before they rushed into the spiral loop tunnels at Wassen they caught a glimpse of the village church far below in the valley. The tunnel described a complete circle inside the mountain, descending all the time. They came out for a moment and found they were level with the church, then they were in the tunnel again. Next time they emerged the Wassen church was well above them and so were the bridges and the steel pylons carrying the overhead wires of the railway line where they had just come from.

The valley became wider, but it was still wild, and to reach the lake of Lucerne they travelled along a narrow ledge close to foaming waterfalls and through more tunnels. The line ran along the sunny shore of the lake's southern arm, mostly in short tunnels which formed the famous Axenstrasse with its openings cut out of the rock. John got a fleeting glimpse of the Rütli. He left Herr Tschudi and Herr Häberli at Brunnen on the last part of his journey to Zurich.

Werner was at the station to meet him.

'I say, aren't you *brown*!' he said.

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