UCH has been said and written in praise of bridges, and even though we do not stop to analyze their charm, we are not the less affected by it. Bridges stand for security, for neighborliness, traffic and intercourse; and in many cases they possess a high degree of architectural interest. Many also have the “line of beauty,” and adding immeasurably to their picturesque quality is their “double,” the unsubstantial image which trembles in the water, and by which, repeated as in a mirror, the arch is made into a circle—a glorified hoop of light.

The surroundings, too, are apt to be more or less attractive, for water brings fruitfulness, and about a bridge is usually a growth of vines and underbrush, and groups of water-loving trees. Or, if the land is flat and fertile, harvest fields come down to the water’s edge. This fruitfulness along the waterside no doubt gave rise to the old German legend, that in years of prosperity the spirit of Charlemagne would cross over the Rhine on a bridge of gold, to bless the vineyards and harvest fields.

Every language has its proverbs on bridges. The feeling of safety they inspire is expressed in this canny Scotch saying:

“Praise the bridge which carries you over; Praise the ford as you find it.”

There is a terse Latin proverb of danger:

“Between the bridge and the stream! Between the sword and the throat!”

And doubtless this familiar saying inspired St. Augustine’s expression, “The Lord’s mercy may be found between the bridge and the stream.”

In some countries there is great difficulty in bridging streams. They are the dry lands, where rivers shrink in summer and the water meanders like a silver thread through a wide waste of sand, sometimes disappearing altogether to reappear far down the river bed. Over these sandy bottoms no bridge is needed for months, but when the rains come, such arroyos are filled with roaring floods, wild wastes of water, swirling from bank to bank, menacing everything with destruction. It takes structures of Roman build to bridge them safely. It is in the temperate countries, with narrow streams, that the rural bridge is found at its best. The water flows peacefully between deep banks, and stone arches thrown across afford safe passage to the traveler. Such are the old bridges given in this series of pictures, which carry country roads across the Conococheague, a stream in western Maryland, flowing under the slopes of the North
THE BRIDGE WHICH CARRIES THE NATIONAL ROAD ACROSS THE CONOCOCHEGUE.

THE CONOCOCHEGUE BRIDGE NEAR WILLIAMSPORT.
THE BRIDGE AT MERCERSBURGH, HIGH UP THE STREAM.

THE MOST BEAUTIFULLY PLACED BRIDGE OF ALL, AT BROADFORDING.
BEAUTIFUL BRIDGES OF THE CONOCOCHEAGUE

Mountain, and emptying its waters into the Potomac. It is a prosperous, agricultural country, a limestone region, and this native stone has been used to build these bridges, which brings them intimately into the landscape.

WHERE the Conococheague joins the Potomac, is the town of Williamsport. Just above the village, a beautiful grey bridge of four arches carries the old road over the stream. It stands high out of the water, and is set in a picturesque neighborhood. Above it are the ruins of an old stone mill; below, an aqueduct carries the Chesapeake and Ohio canal across its mouth. Williamsport was one of the first sites proposed for the national Capital, a suggestion which provoked much sarcasm. "Where is this Conocojee?" the politicians of the day inquired, and the uncouth word became a party cry. Williamsport for many years seemed willing to live on the glory of that lost possibility, and on the traffic brought to it by the canal; but now a large tannery has given life and some turbulence to the town. It is a village where one finds ancient stone houses, small and thick-walled, set below the level of the street, and these give it an air of stability and antiquity.

At the foot of the hill, the waters of the canal slide silently by. Canal boats, with fascinating motion, glide between the narrow banks. Snubbing posts mark the course, and the immemorial mule kicks and squeals his way along the tow-path. Sometimes the family pig sticks his face out of the little window at the end of the boat, and grins familiarly at the passer-by. To see canal boats go through locks is something that can never pall through use or custom. There is something in the rise and fall of the water, the rushing tide, the dripping gates, the even motion of the boat, effortless as the progress of a swan, and in the mere mechanical maneuver, which never loses its interest and charm. The boat glides down the canal, as stately as the barges of Venice. The lock-keeper saunters out from a gossip with his cronies, and all the idlers stand about to watch the boat go through the lock. The rope dips, the mules are released, the boatmen take their ease, the water swells, pours and rushes; the great, clumsy gates with their levers and bars swing into place, shut and open. The boat drops to its new level, the mule shakes his ears, kicks, squeals a protest, and takes up his ambling pace along the tow-path. The show is over for the time; but soon again the clear sound of a horn, away up the long ribbon of the canal, in the blue distance of the mountain, tells that another slow, mysterious barge is gliding down, and calls the keeper to take it quietly and comfortably through the lock.
BEAUTIFUL BRIDGES OF THE CONOCOCHAGUE

BUT we have strayed from our bridges. Let us take a glance at the most famous one which carried a branch of the National Road across the Conococheague—the Western Pike, as it is now called. This was the road from Baltimore to Cumberland, where it joined the National Road. It was the first great thoroughfare from east to west, and connected the seaboard with the country beyond the Alleghenies. Today we hear a great deal of the lure of the road, and its appeal to adventurous spirits; but in its heyday, there never was a road with more of that appeal to the wandering spirit of mankind than this Western Pike. It took men through almost unbroken forests to the great prairies of the West. When it was made, the streams of the country were crossed by wooden bridges, but after the makers of the Great Road had built these fine stone arches, the men of Washington County built up and down the streams, on both sides of the valley, the stone bridges which are now such a beautiful feature of the country.

This pioneer bridge has five arches. Dusty fields on one side come down to a pebbly beach, but hills rise from the western bank, and the road goes up to the old town of Clearspring. A log church stood near the bridge a century and a half ago. The tract on which it rested was called "The Mountain of Wales," and the road was then called the "Washington Road." When it was made into a turnpike, an immense amount of traffic went over it. Now the automobile takes the place of the family coach, the motor omnibus replaces the stage.

But of all the bridges of the Conococheague, the one at Broadfording is the favorite. It is near a tract which was named "High Germany," and here again an old church, on the hilltop nearby, overlooked the "meanderings of the Conococheague." Steep, wooded hills come down to the stream, shutting out the world with their green curtains. Under arching boughs one comes down the declivity to the quiet stretch of water. There is not a house in sight, or any hint of humanity except the bridge. Its gentle rise and perfect curves make it a thing of delight, and the reflection of its arches forms perfect circles. Beyond it rise the "Pine Hills," noted for their flowers—dogwood, redbud and azaleas in spring, violet and purple asters under the red autumn foliage of oaks and maples.

Next, up the stream, is the bridge near Mercersburgh, another beautiful structure. Each has its own charm, its peculiar associations. They lend much to the interest of drives through this part of western Maryland, and set a standard, both adequate and beautiful, for the crossing of streams by country roads.