



## A Canterbury Pilgrimage / An Italian Pilgrimage

**Elizabeth Robins Pennell**

**Joseph Pennell**

**Dave Buchanan, Editor**

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Erotica excepted, does any genre surpass travel writing in its ability to deliver reading pleasure, particularly when photos or illustrations accompany masterful prose? How better for a writer and reader to connect if not over their shared fondness for a distant locale?

In the airy, self-deprecating style of Robert Louis Stevenson, an American couple captured the imaginations of UK and US readers through the five illustrated cycle-travel books they created beginning in the 1880s. Yes, bikes existed back then—they were all the rage, in fact—and Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell succeeded in bringing the leisure-touring idea to the forefront through their jaunts aboard a tandem tricycle outfitted with luggage racks.

Long out of print, this new edition includes the Pennells's journey from London to Canterbury, *A Canterbury Pilgrimage*, and Florence to Rome, *An Italian Pilgrimage*. Cycling historian Dave Buchanan contributes an enlightening introduction which grounds the couple in the literary/art world of the late nineteenth century and gives a gearhead sense of bicycling history. But Elizabeth's delightful prose steals the show:

*Our road for some distance went over streets laid with the great stones of old Tuscan pavement—and for tricyclers, these streets are not very bad going—between tall grey houses, with shrines built in them, and those high walls which radiate from Florence in every direction, and keep one from seeing the gardens and green places within. Women, plaiting straw, great yellow bunches of which hung at their waists, and children greeted us with shouts. Shirtless bakers, their hands white with flour, and barbers holding their razors, men with faces half shaved and still lathered, and others with wineglasses to their lips, rushed to look at this new folly of the foreigner, for ours was the first tandem tricycle ever seen in Italy.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (Winter 2016)

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