

THE MONKS OF ST. BERNARD—THE HOSPICE IN THE SNOW.

We take the following interesting description of the famous Alpine Hospice of St. Bernard from a sketch in the 'Boston Commercial Bulletin,' written by Mr. Wm. A. Hovey:—

My guide has kept his word. We were soon in the hospitable hands of the monks, and I had time to put away my pack and make a hasty toilet before the great bell of the monastery announced the hour of noon, and the mid-day meal. Dinner was served in the refectory, which is in the second storey. There were perhaps a dozen monks, one of whom seemed to be in authority presiding. There were besides, perhaps, twenty travellers; some of them tourists who had come, as I had, for pleasure, and some who were passing on foot from Switzerland to Italy, or *vice versa*, for purposes of business. The monks were Swiss, Germans, and Italians, but they all spoke French, which seemed, by common consent, to be the language of the establishment.

Among their guests were English, Germans, Americans, Swiss, Italians, and French, and one dark-complexioned man who had little to say to anyone, but who turned out to be a Polish Jew. He left as soon as dinner was over, after having left a handsome gratuity in the hands of one of the monks to be deposited in the "cuisse" in the chapel, and carried with him a heavy pack concerning the contents of which there were many conjectures. Upon inquiry, I found that he was well known at the Hospice, that he crossed the mountains at regular intervals, always going northward, and that he never yet failed to leave a sum more than sufficient to compensate for his entertainment, although he had never entered the chapel to deposit it as others did. "The folks hereabout," said the monk, "look upon him with dread, and say that when he has sold his goods and emptied his pack he can fly back, being in league with the Evil One, but I know that it is easier for him, when he wants to go back for a fresh stock, to take the nearest pass. Perhaps on the St. Gothard they think he walks south and flies north. 'Qui Sait?'"

Dinner over, I began a tour of inspection of the Hospice. The ground floor serves the purpose of stable, barn, woodshed, and general storehouse. Upon the next floor, which is reached by a flight of steps from the outside, is the chapel, and various rooms used in the administration of the establishment. The floor above contains the sleeping rooms, or dormitories, and the refectory, of which I have already spoken. On this floor, too, is the reception room, where guests are entertained. This room is particularly interesting to strangers, as it contains many gifts from travellers who have been befriended by the monks. These are mostly pictures for the adornment of the walls, but in some cases other things have been selected. One lady sent a piano, but whether its notes are ever heard, save when some lady tourist tries her hand at it, I cannot say. One thing, however, I do know. It has furnished the accompaniment for more than one American chorus, and many a time have peregrinating Cambridge students stood around it and made the room ring with the notes of "Fair Harvard."

Adjoining the reception room is a kind of museum, where are collected many objects of interest, both to the natural historian and the antiquary. There are pressed and dried plants, some of them of very great beauty, mosses and lichens, insects and a fine collection of Alpine minerals. Then there are the antiquities.

Near where the Hospice now stands, in the old Roman days, was a temple where Jupiter was worshipped; and it is said that paganism had a considerable foothold here down to the time of St. Bernard, about the year 1000. The temple is utterly gone, but portions of the pavement remain, and cut in the living rock may still be seen the steps which served as an approach to it. The antiquities in the museum are mostly relics of this temple, comprising bronze figures, vessels and utensils used in pagan worship, coins, arms, etc. As a collection of Roman antiquities it is meagre, of course, but as illustrating the thorough manner in which the Romans Romanised every place that fell into their hands, it is exceedingly valuable and interesting.

THE MORGUE.

Every one knows the monks of St. Bernard serve the bodies of the travellers who perish upon the mountains in the same way that the Franciscans in Rome do those of their brethren, that is, they keep them above ground in a building set apart for the purpose. The reason is very simple. The disasters which bring death to travellers by the pass occur almost invariably in the winter, and it is seldom that a body is recovered before it is frozen stiff. Burying, with the ground frozen to a depth of many feet, is out of the question, and there is but one thing to do, to put the remains in a suitable place. The clothing is not removed, as it is of assistance in aiding the recognition by inquiring friends, and owing to the extreme dryness and rarity of the air, it is found that the remains can gradually dry up, without anything approaching decomposition, even in summer.

A visit to the morgue is *en regle*, of course, and not to be neglected; but it is not a pleasant experience, and one must be more fond of grinning skulls, shrunken limbs, and distorted human forms to stay there longer than is absolutely necessary. The several individuals, the latest arrivals, that were then doing the "leading business" in that show had their histories, all of which were given in full by the lay brother who acted as a *cicerone*; but I did not stop to listen, preferring to make the acquaintance of one or two shaggy dogs that lay around the entrance to the Hospice. What noble great fellows they were, tawny in color, strong in limb, with immense paws, shaggy coats, and large honest-looking eyes.

There has been a great deal of poetry and a great deal of nonsense written about these dogs, and things so wonderful have been ascribed to them that their actual services seem tame; but the fact is that, in the most blinding storm, when the snow is so deep as to well-nigh bury them, they will unerringly guide a traveller by the shortest cut to the Hospice, and that neither monk or servant thinks of stir-

ring far from its doors in such weather without them. They are, like the Newfoundland, fond of a romp, and I saw no more pleasing sight, during my visit to the famous place, than a genuine romp, in which two of these dogs and a manly little English boy of eight or nine years took part. The three chased each other, the boy pulling this one by the ears, the other by the tail, and finally they all went rolling down a slope together, the dogs carrying on a low, good-natured growl, the boy laughing, and some twenty spectators, including the father of the youthful performer, looking on and enjoying the fun.

In the evening, after supper and before service in the chapel, which took place about eight, I got hold of one of the older monks, and "interviewed," as the modern phrase has it. And the result of the interview was that I learned a number of interesting facts, some of which I here append. At one time when the pass was much more frequented than now for the purpose of commercial communication, the Hospice was one of the wealthiest ecclesiastical establishments in Europe. It had lands in many cantons of Switzerland, in Italy, in France, and even in England. Its revenues were immense, and it was constantly receiving valuable grants from the several reigning monarchs who seemed to take pleasure in bestowing favors on so excellent a charity. In those days hospitality was freely dispensed to all comers, rich and poor, of high or low degree, and the thought of compensation never once occurred to either guest or host.

But times changed. The revenues of the monastery were greatly curtailed—the Reformation came. Church lands in many places were forfeited, and in some of the Swiss cantons the monks lost fruitful sources of revenue. Princes and potentates were less anxious to contribute, and Sardinia even made the brethren pay tax on a nearly barren waste which they used as a pasture, and which lay in part beyond the Swiss line. With revenues thus cut down, and with the advent of a curious horde, not of poor wayfarers, but of travellers with well-filled purses, who had no need of charity, travellers who unlike those who had gone that way before them, were not content with a hard pallet and dry crust, but wanted, even when nearly ten thousand feet above the sea, good living and good beds, and were more than willing to pay for them, the resources of the brethren were severely tasked.

So an expedient was devised. In the chapel there was put a box, and in this box there was a little hole, and through this hole every traveller, if he chose, dropped something towards the support of the establishment. No one was asked to give, and those who could not afford it were given to understand that they were as welcome as those that gave most generously.

The result was what might be expected. Tourists, as a rule, leave more, by far, than they would pay for very much better accommodation at a hotel, and it is seldom that a traveller on pleasure intent accepts the hospitality of the place gratuitously. And it is well that it is so; for, besides many poor travellers, especially in the late fall and early spring, who must be provided for without compensation, the monks have themselves, their servants and their dogs to feed, and what is quite as costly, to keep warm during the long and severe winter, and it is but right if these self-sacrificing men, without personal reward of any kind, are willing to devote their lives to this good work, that they should be generously supported out of the bounty of those who have an abundance.

RECORD OF GERMAN PERSECUTION, &c

(FROM THE LONDON 'TABLET'S' CORRESPONDENT.)

AN address of sympathy drawn up by eleven Italian Bishops assembled at Ravenna, and forwarded to the Archbishop of Cologne in the month of July last, on occasion of the centenary festival of St. Apollinaris, first Bishop of Ravenna, has been answered lately by Monsignor Melchers, as soon almost as he had been released from imprisonment. The Archbishop's letter runs as follows:—

"The magnificent address which your Grace, in company with ten other Bishops in Council assembled at Ravenna, near the tomb of the glorious martyr St. Apollinaris, forwarded to your fellow Bishops imprisoned in Germany on account of their defending the liberty of the Church, and which was subsequently signed by fifteen other Italian Bishops, amongst them the Cardinal-Archbishop of Ferrara and Bologna, has been lately delivered to me, just after the term of my imprisonment had expired, by the Prince Bishop of Breslau. This splendid testimonial of your brotherly charity and complete unanimity of feeling has filled my breast with feelings of the deepest consolation and spiritual gladness, and I took measures at once to have it brought, if not into the possession, at least to the knowledge of my four brother Bishops still in prison; namely, the Archbishop of Posen, his coadjutor Janiszewski, and the Bishops of Trèves and Paderborn. It should have been placed by me in the hands of each one of them had this been easy or possible, but, as you know, freedom of communication by letter is not allowed. In my own name, then, and in that of my very dear imprisoned colleagues, I wish to express to your Grace and to all the other venerable prelates who with yourself have put their signatures to an address so pleasing to us, my most deep and humble feelings of gratitude, beseeching you at the same time, with all the earnestness I can command, to aid us by your fervent prayers that in the sad calamity with which we are now visited we may be able, in the power of God's holy grace, to persevere faithfully to the end, and that the violent . . . with which the Catholic Church in Germany is, . . . on account of the most unjust and deplorable, . . . and . . . may be brought to a termination, and that the freedom we previously enjoyed may be restored.

"Finally, I beg your Grace to have the goodness to communicate the expression of our deepest gratitude to your colleagues who signed the address.—I remain, with sentiments of the most heartfelt esteem and brotherly affection, yours in Christ Jesus,

"† PAUL, Archbishop of Cologne.
"To his Grace the Most Reverend Archbishop of Vincenzo Moretti, Ravenna."