

in distress. Every year ten or twelve thousand strangers are supplied with food and lodging free of charge. Numerous dogs of the St. Bernard breed, really magnificent animals, are kept, and are sent out daily in winter during stormy weather in search of travellers needing assistance.

At the highest elevation of the St. Bernard Pass, near the line of perpetual snow, is the Hospice or Monastery of St. Bernard, the highest dwelling in Europe. Here dwell a number of Augustinian monks assisted by lay brethren, celebrated with their dogs for rescuing travellers. In their hospice, at times, as many as five hundred or six hundred travellers have been accommodated at once. The snow around the hospice averages seven to eight feet in depth, and the drifts sometimes rest against it and accumulate to the height of about forty feet. The severest cold recorded is about twenty-nine degrees below zero, and the greatest heat sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit. The route over the Pennine Alps, by the Great St. Bernard, was traversed by Roman armies under Charlemagne and Frederick Barbarossa, and as we have seen, in 1800, by a French army under Napoleon.

In 962, St. Bernard de Menthon founded the monastery here. The inmates now consist of ten or fifteen Augustinian monks and seven attendants, whose office it is to receive and lodge strangers gratuitously, and to render assistance to travellers in danger during the snowy season, which here lasts nearly nine months. In this work of benevolence they are aided by the famous St. Bernard dogs whose kennels are well worth visiting. Their keen sense of smell enables them to track and discover travellers buried in the snow, numbers of whom have been rescued by these noble and sagacious animals. The stock is said to have come originally from the Spanish Pyrenees, but the genuine old breed is extinct.

Of late years from 16,000 to 20,000 travellers have been annually accommodated, while the sum they have contributed barely amounts to what would be a moderate hotel-charge for a thousand guests. The expenses of the establishment are increasing. Provisions are generally brought from Aosta, and in July, August and September about twenty horses are employed daily in the transport of fuel from the Val Ferret, four hours distant.

No reward but consciousness of their Christian duty nobly done could induce the self-sacrificing monks to stop in this desolation of the clouds and storm, to minister to the lost and worn-out traveller. At the mountain top, where the hospice stands, it is always, even in summer-time, cold and dreary and desolate. The monks go up in youth, but seldom withstand the severity of the